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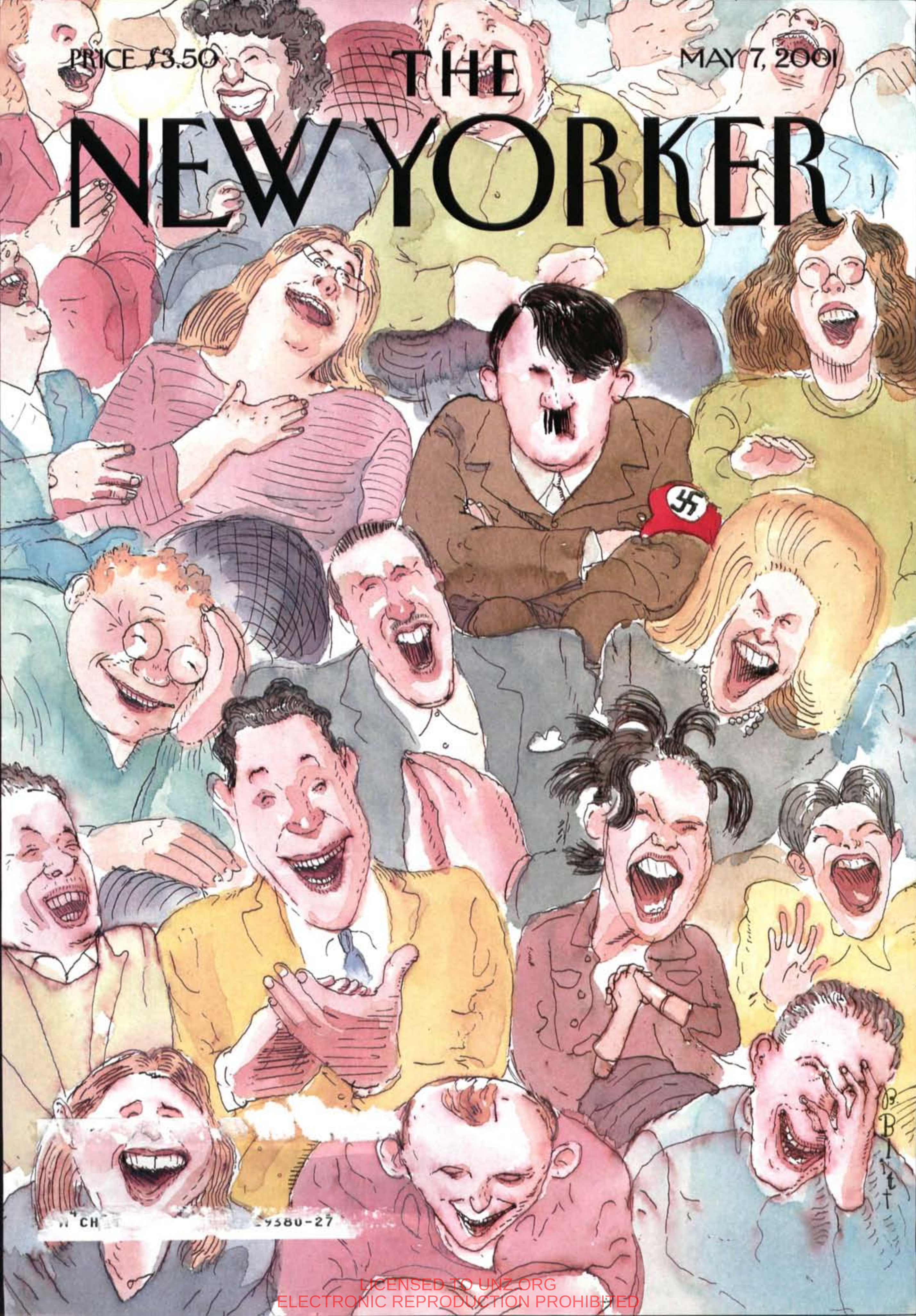
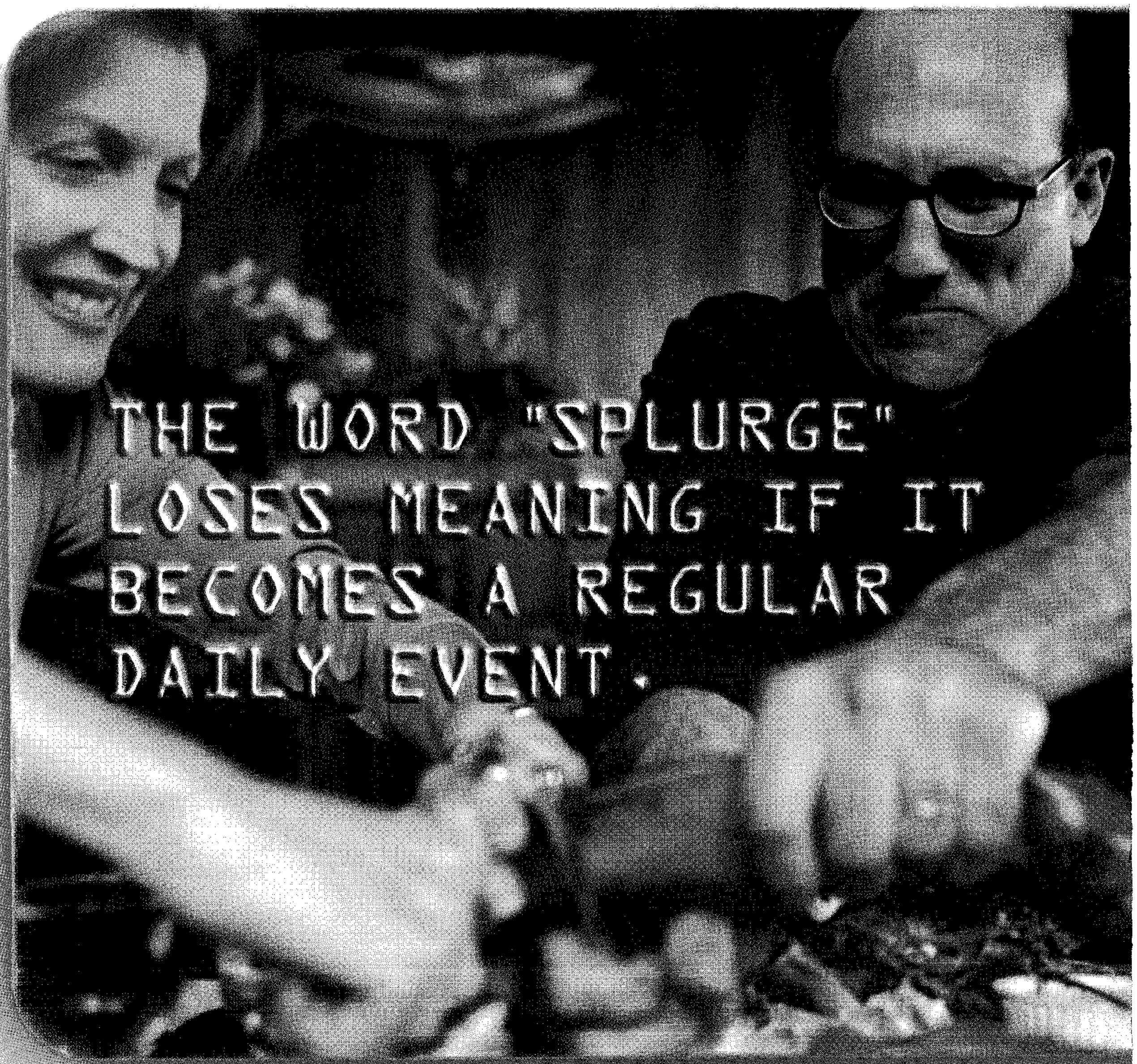
MAY 7, 2001

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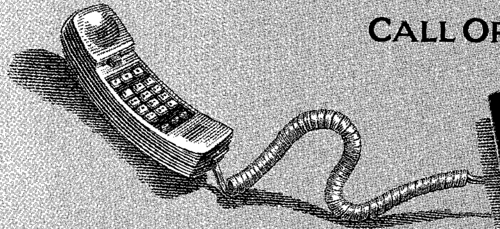

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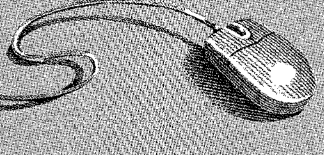

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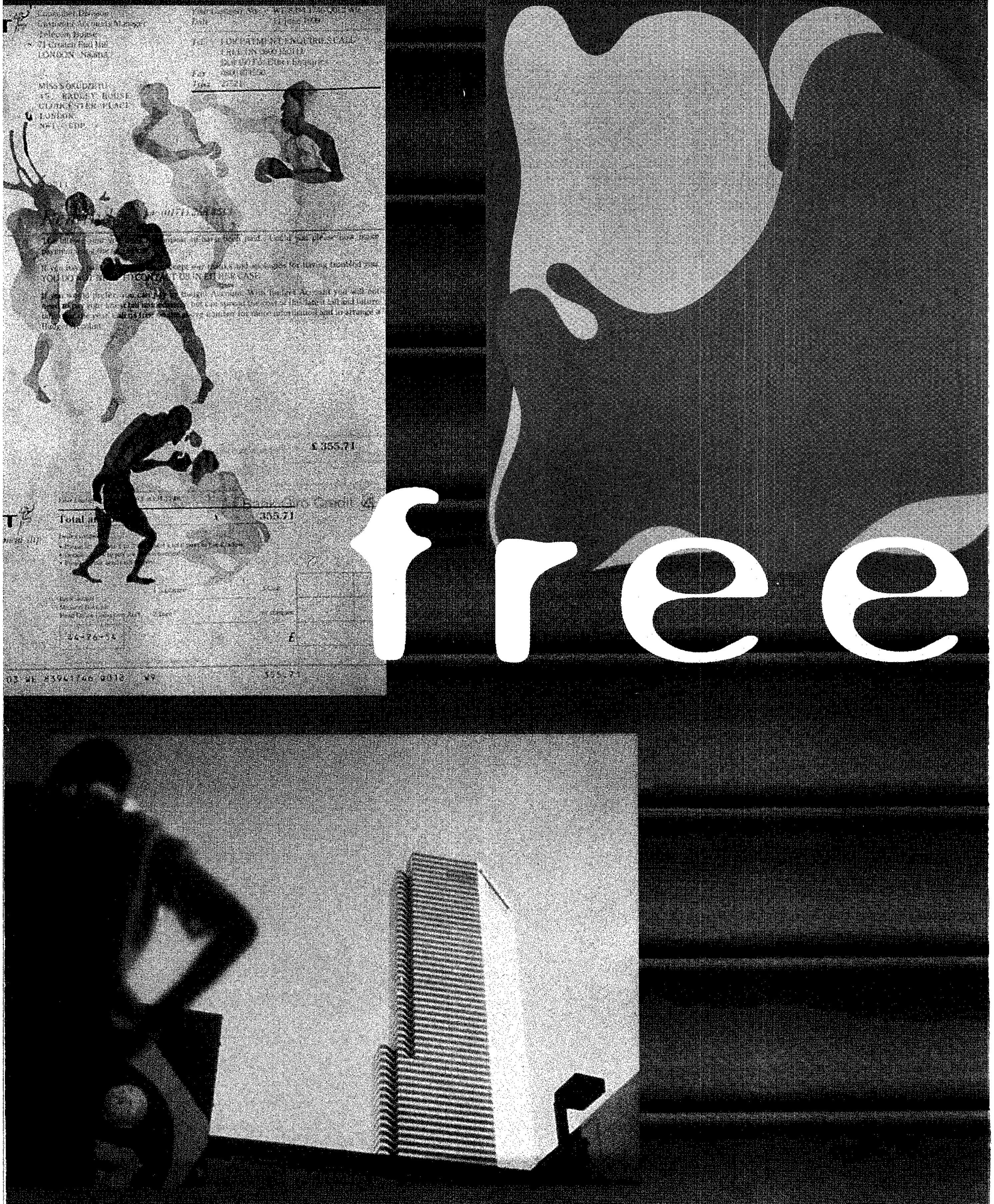

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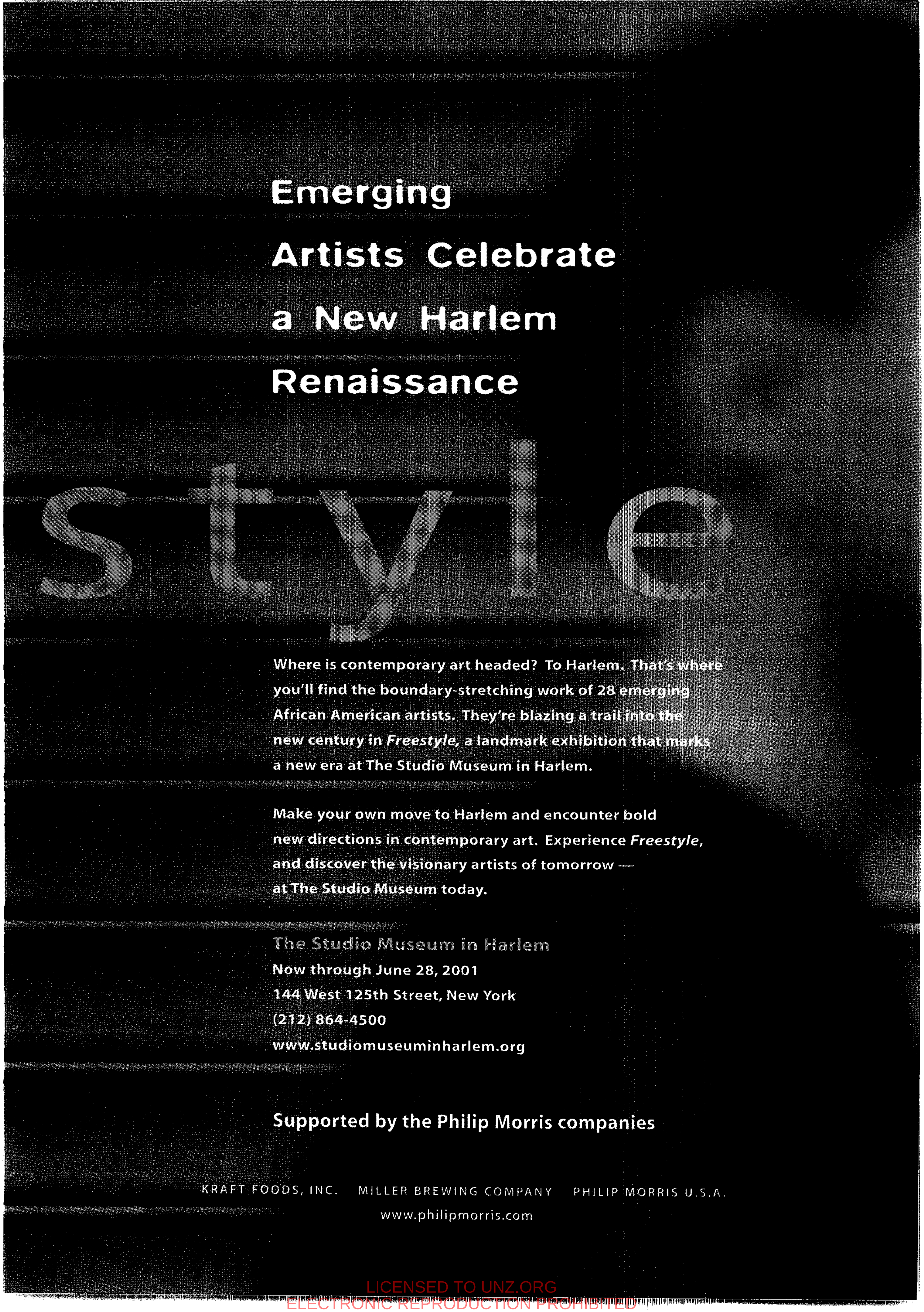

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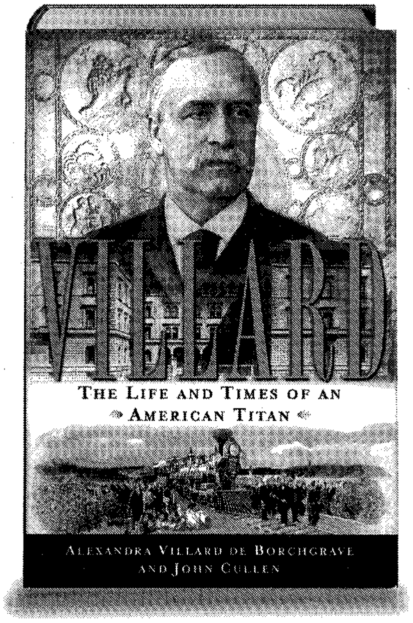
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CONTRIBUTORS

Nicholas Lemann ("The Quiet Man," p. 56) is the magazine's Washington correspondent.

John Gregory Dunne ("The American Raj," p. 46) is the author of six works of nonfiction and five novels, the most recent of which is "Playland."

Jim Crace (Fiction, p. 78) won this year's National Book Critics Circle Award for his novel "Being Dead." "The Devil's Larder," a collection of short fiction, comes out this fall.

James Galvin (Poem, p. 62) teaches at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. His novel, "Fencing the Sky," is available in paperback.

Joan Acocella (Dancing, p. 94), a staff writer, is the editor of "Mission to Siam," the memoirs of her missionary grandmother, Jessie MacKinnon Hartzell.

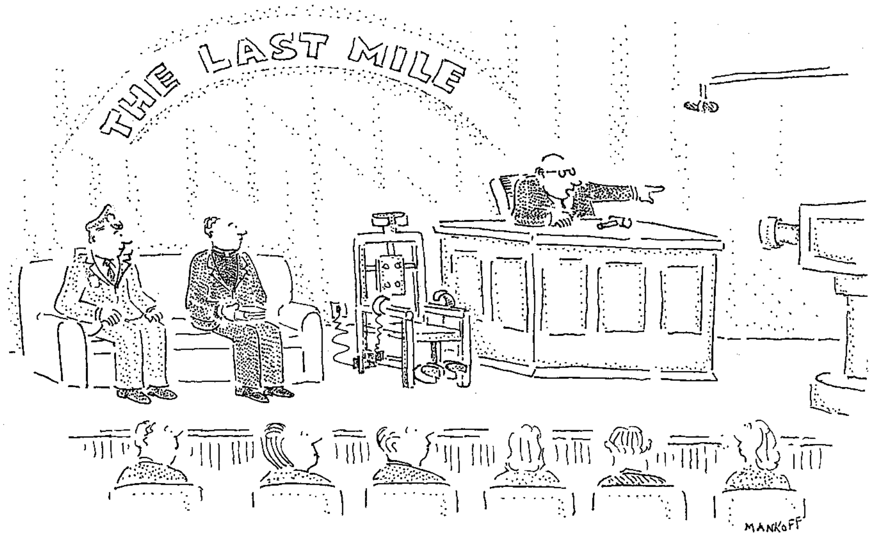
Peter Hessler ("Great Sprint Forward," p. 38) wrote about his experience as a Peace Corps teacher in China in the book "River Town," which came out last January.

Judith Thurman ("The Queen Himself," p. 72) is the author of "Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette."

John Updike (Books, p. 87) is a regular contributor of fiction and literary criticism. His most recent book is "Licks of Love," a collection of short stories and a novella.

Barry Blitt (Cover), an artist and illustrator, has contributed more than a hundred covers and illustrations to the magazine since 1992.

Paul Slansky (The Back Page, p. 102) is a television and film writer and the author of "The Clothes Have No Emperor." ♦



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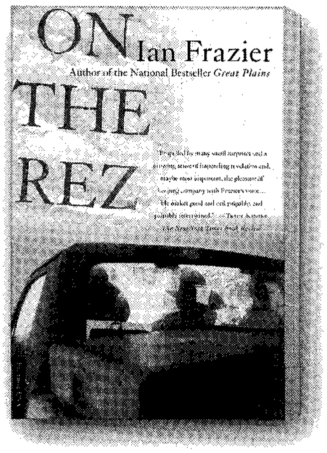

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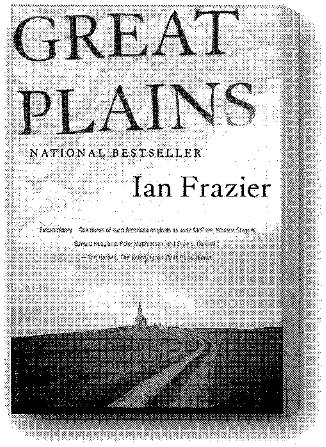

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SCARLETT'S PROPERTY

Why should Scarlett O'Hara's owners even want to stifle Cynara, the half sister Alice Randall gives her in "The Wind Done Gone," let alone have the legal right to do so (The Talk of the Town, April 9th, by Adam Gopnik)? This is not a copyright-infringement issue, as the Margaret Mitchell trust contends in its suit to block Randall's book. By retelling "Gone with the Wind" from the perspective of a slave, Randall has used the sharp blade of satire—not plagiarism, not piggyback prose—to slice cleanly into the romantic myth of the Old South. One can like her book, or not. But the conflict in this case is between Randall's freedom of speech and the Mitchell trust's claim that its property rights extend to control over another writer's imagination.

John Egerton
Nashville, Tenn.

Does Alice Randall, an African-American writer, have the legal right to use Mitchell's characters to create a "rejoinder" to "Gone with the Wind"? The answer, under U.S. copyright law, seems to be no. Does Randall have the right to tell her story and that of her people? Of course. However, in "The Wind Done Gone," she is not telling her story; she is borrowing Mitchell's. The many writers who have spoken out in defense of Randall have lost sight of the fact that the Mitchell trust's suit is a simple, and essential, defense of the rights of authors. Why doesn't Randall try to write a novel about a Southern plantation from the viewpoint of a slave with characters and scenes and locales of her own creation? As it is, her story remains on property that belongs to Mitchell.

John Wiley, Jr.
Richmond, Va.

THE STRIP MALL DID IT

Mark Singer's sad story about the misdeeds of the Wallkill Police Department can, as he suggests, be read as a cautionary tale of the consequences of unplanned sprawl ("Dirty Laundry," April 9th). Within the memory of living residents, towns as close as sixty to seventy miles from New York City did not think of themselves as suburban but as rural. And for years the agricultural base that created many of these communities continued to justify this view economically. Eisenhower's interstates exchanged distance for time, with the result that farmland became more valuable for third-ring housing. It is telling that Singer's main character, Oscar Dino, who is unable to stop the police department's descent, makes his living from real estate. As Dino told Singer, "Take a look at this town. We built it by paving over the countryside. This is what we're stuck with."

Richard Wengenroth
New York City

Singer's comment that "the relentless banality of a landscape can create a vacuum where a sense of community might otherwise have flourished" too easily blames the strip mall for the lack of integrity in public figures. This amounts to saying that "the asphalt made me do it," or that sin follows form. It also perpetuates the myth that the ordinary commercial landscape is morally and socially bankrupt. In our car-dominated culture, the roads, strip malls, and parking lots are where our everyday routines overlap, where community members own and work in car dealerships, restaurants, and plumbing-supply showrooms. The paved parking lot is now the town green. Wallkill's Miracle Mile strip, like others throughout the country, is an economically, socially, and culturally vital place—and, in its way, an aesthetically vital one as well.

Susan Nigra Snyder and Steven Izenour
Philadelphia, Pa.

•

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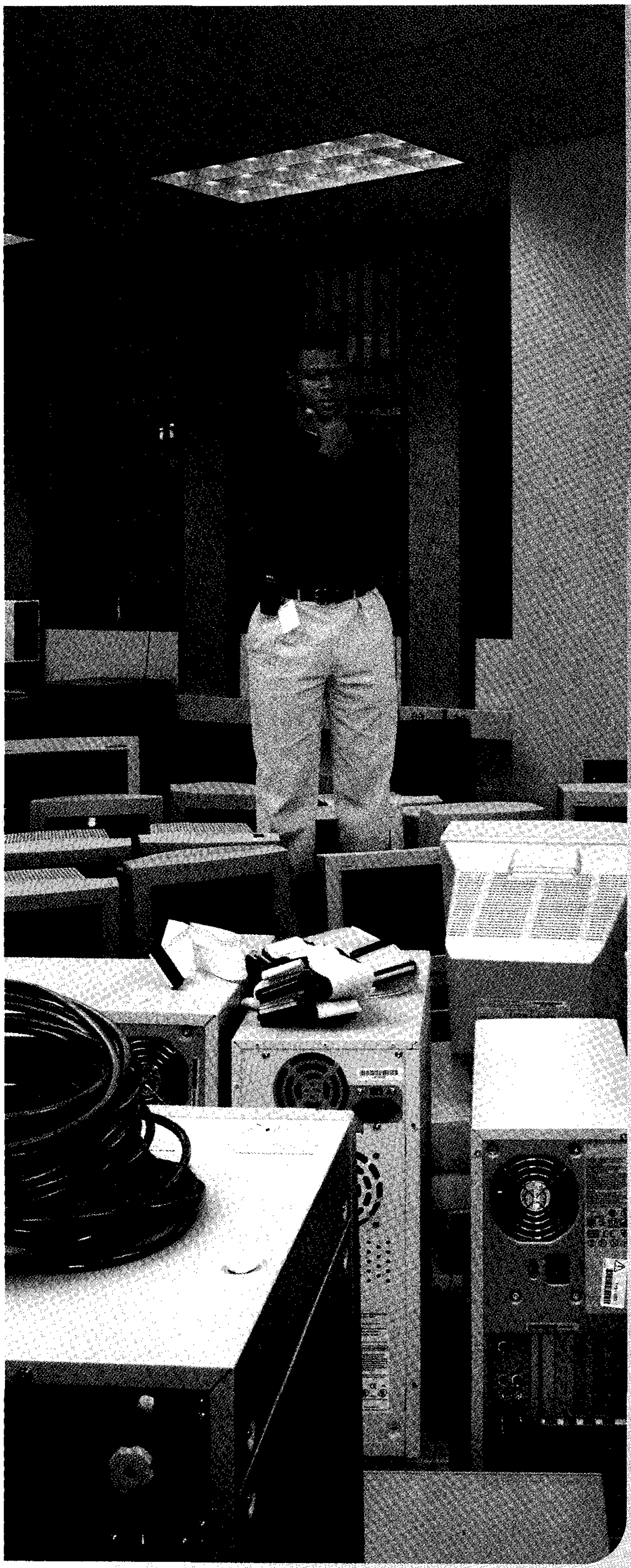
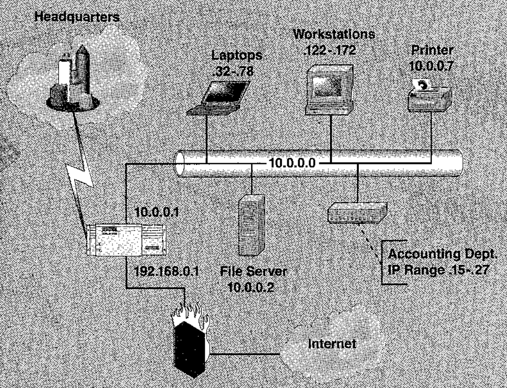


See what I'm saying?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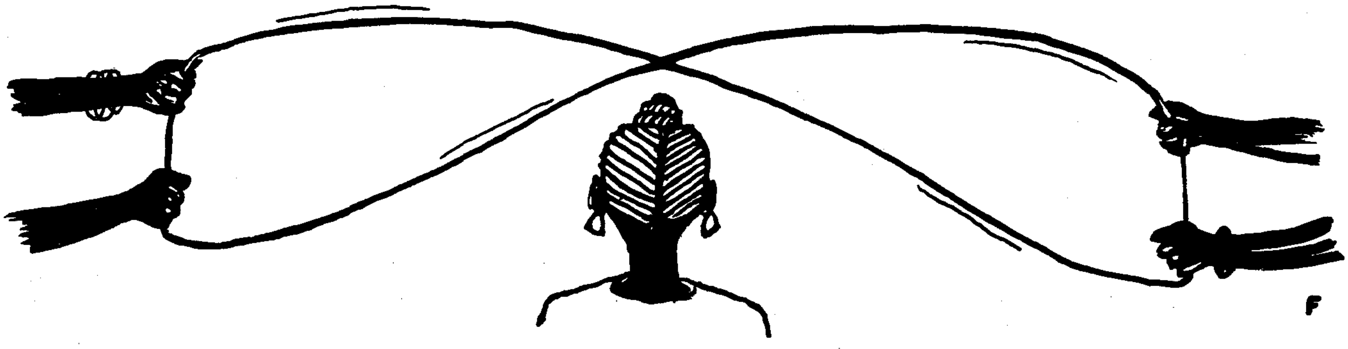
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AJAX
The Bat Theatre Company presents Alice Tuan's play about a sexual foursome. Opens May 3 at 8:30 and continues, Thursdays through Saturdays, through May 26. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407.)

BLUR
Polly Draper and Angela Goethals lead the cast in a new comedy by Melanie Marnich, in which a teen-ager discovers she's going blind. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE DOG PROBLEM
David Rabe's new play, about a man, his dog, and the Mafia. Previews begin May 8. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

ELI'S COMIN'
A musical inspired by the songs of Laura Nyro, co-created by Diane Paulus and Bruce Buschel. In previews through May 6. Opens May 7 at 8. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303.)

FORTY-SECOND STREET
Michael Cumpsty, Christine Ebersole, Mary Testa, and Jonathan Freeman star in a revival of the 1980 musical comedy. Opens May 2 at 6:30. (Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

GLIMMER, GLIMMER & SHINE
From Warren Leight ("Side Man"), a new drama about jazz musicians—twin brothers who were big-band trumpeters together in the fifties. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

HAIR
An Encores! concert staging of Galt MacDermot's 1967 counterculture musical. Six performances: May 3-4 and May 7 at 8, May 5 at 2 and 8, and May 6 at 6:30. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

LIPSTICK TRACES
Greil Marcus's paean to punk rock, adapted for the stage by the Austin troupe Rude Mechanicals and presented by the Foundry Theatre. In previews. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 800-965-4827.)

MADAME MELVILLE
Macaulay Culkin is a fifteen-year-old American student and Joely Richardson his French teacher, in a drama by Richard Nelson, set in nineteen-sixties Paris. Two previews on May 2. Opens May 3 at 6:45. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

SHEQUIDA'S OPERA FOR DUMMIES
The Juilliard-trained drag queen's ninety-minute lecture-and-demonstration course on the history of opera. Opens May 7 at 8 and continues, Mondays only, through June 25. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

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URINETOWN: THE MUSICAL
A musical comedy by Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis, about a city in a state of ecological disaster. John Rando is the director. In previews through May 5. Opens May 6 at 7:30. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER
The musical. With a score by Don Schlitz and a book by Ken Ludwig. Scott Ellis is the director. (Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 307-4100.)

BAT BOY: THE MUSICAL
At the very least, the entrepreneurs of this gleeful nihilism (book by Keythe Farley and Brian Flemming, music and lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe, direction by Scott Schwartz) have the courage of their lack of convictions. It's a kind of "My Fair Bat Boy," in which a half-bat, half-man—memorably played by Deven May, as a cross between Freud's Wolf Man, Michael Crawford's Phantom, and Jerry Lewis's spastic—emerges from his childhood cave into adult bourgeois life. But the musical world he enters is one of darkness, not light, of ironies, not idealism, where plot is a history of abdications and song extolls the emptiness of all the standard credos—Christianity, family, community, love, redemption—and of the musical itself. It's a jejune vision, but a smart, playful, and funny one nonetheless. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/9/01.) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

BELLS ARE RINGING
Faith Prince and Marc Kudisch lead the cast in a revival of the 1956 Betty Comden–Adolph Green–Jule Styne musical. Tina Landau is the director. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

BLAST!
A musical extravaganza, which evolved from the drum-and-bugle corps Star of Indiana. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

THE BOOK OF LIZ
In the latest comedy by the brother-and-sister team of Amy and David Sedaris, Ms. Sedaris portrays the sweating, mousy Elizabeth, a demure Puritan believer from the religious Squeamish Community who goes on a picaresque adventure after being refused the honor of organizing the Chastity Parade. In the course of her travels, she gets to wear a Planter's-peanut outfit and work in a restaurant called Plymouth Crock, which is populated entirely, it seems, by gay A.A. members. She even seeks medical help for her perspiration problem. As comic drama, it's sort of an amateur fizzle, but it does offer the Sedarises the opportunity to tell some very good jokes in silly costumes and to bask in the smug downtown certainty of a soiled world. (4/9/01) (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 239-6200.)

CAVEMAN
The latest play from the pen of Richard Maxwell runs in repertory with his earlier play, "Boxing 2000." (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 479-7979. Closes May 19.)

A CLASS ACT
Ed Kleban's life following his success as the lyricist of "A Chorus Line" is the basis of this musical. With songs by Mr. Kleban and a book by Linda Kline and Lonny Price. Mr. Price is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

CODE OF THE WEST
Mark R. Giesser's play about the San Franciscan Joshua A. Norton, who proclaimed himself emperor of the United States and protector of Mexico in the eighteen-fifties. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200.)

CRIMES OF THE HEART
The Irish director Garry Hynes ("The Beauty Queen of Leenane") proves herself to be as comfortable in Dixie as she is on the Emerald Isle with this sparkling revival of Beth Henley's 1979 comedy, about three eccentric sisters having a very bad day down in Hazlehurst, Mississippi. Things at first seem a bit broad and ridiculous (and they are: this is the Deep South), but Henley's characters have real warmth, and the terrific cast (Julia Murney, Enid Graham, Talmadge Lowe, Amy Ryan, Mary Catherine Garrison, and Jason Butler Harner) embrace the roles with vivid affection and spot-on comic timing. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

THE DEAD EYE BOY
Lili Taylor leads the cast in a drama by Angus MacLachlan, about a woman trying to escape a past filled with drug abuse and violence. (MCC Theatre, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

DESIGN FOR LIVING
To be great, comedy must be cruel, and that is why it is usually written by the young. Though he wrote it when he was only thirty-four, Noël Coward's (then scandalous) 1933 tale of an insouciant ménage à trois (Jennifer Ehle, Dominic West, and Alan Cumming) is more a lecture masquerading as theatre; it's too schematic and too self-important for the cruelty to play out in surprising ways. Still,

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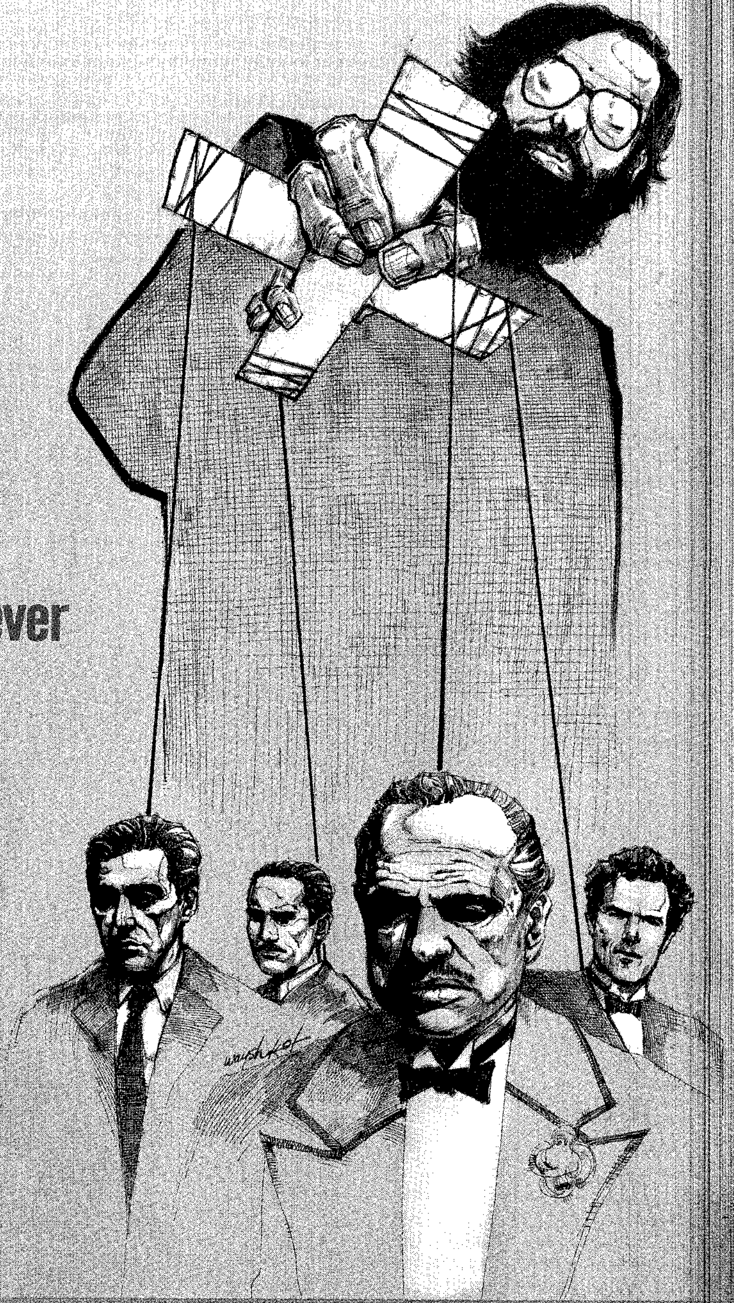

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	10E/P	JAMES CAAN: INSIDE THE ACTORS STUDIO
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Joe Mantello's production is superbly cast and well focussed. (3/26/01) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes May 13.)

FOLLIES

This revival of Stephen Sondheim and James Goldman's landmark 1971 musical, which takes place at a reunion of Ziegfeld-like performers, is less lavish than the original production, but no matter: the show's real grandeur lies in its imaginative structure and the unfolding of its lyrically rich, resonant songs. In the hands of Matthew Warchus, who directed, the relentless, unblinking intelligence is intact. The theme of loss and regret is played out in the unhappy marriages of two middle-aged couples, convincingly played by Blythe Danner, Gregory Harrison, Judith Ivey, and Treat Williams, against a backdrop of show-business dreams and promises enacted by performers from a bygone era. (Of these, Marge Champion and Joan Roberts are especially delightful.) You may want your pleasures to be a little less ambiguous than those offered here; it's possible to leave the theatre feeling a little mixed up inside, as though you've just received the most unforgettable parting kiss of your life. (4/23 & 30/01) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE GARDENS OF FRAU HESS

The Jewish Repertory Theatre presents a drama by first-time playwright Milton F. Marcus, about the relationship between a Nazi's wife and a concentration-camp prisoner who becomes her gardener. (Duke Theatre, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes May 13.)

THE GATHERING

Hal Linden portrays a Holocaust survivor in Arje Shaw's drama about three generations of a Jewish family. Rebecca Taylor is the director. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

GEORGE GERSHWIN ALONE

A one-man portrait with music, written and performed by Hershey Felder and directed by Joel Zwick. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 349-6200.)

THE GOOD THIEF

Brian D'Arcy James portrays a petty criminal who botches a heist, in a drama by Conor McPherson. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

IN THE JUNGLE OF THE CITY

An Irondale Ensemble Project staging of Brecht's 1924 play. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 718-488-9233.)

THE INVENTION OF LOVE

Tom Stoppard's witty, challenging account of the classicist and poet A. E. Housman and the love that not only dared not speak its name but didn't even have one until 1895 (when the word "homosexual" was coined). Jack O'Brien's well-directed, lucid production features a sumptuous set by Bob Crowley and some fine acting, especially by Richard Easton as the elder/dead Housman—he parses every sentence and joke so that the audience is never at sea—and Robert Sean Leonard as the young classicist in love. David Harbour also turns in a vivid portrait as the sporty object of Housman's platonic affection. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JANE EYRE

John Caird and Paul Gordon's musical is respectful of and faithful to Brontë's original, but it needs to be brilliant and piercing, and it isn't. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG

Maximilian Schell and George Grizzard lead the cast in the Abby Mann drama. John Tillinger is the director. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6280.)

KING HEDLEY II

August Wilson's new play revisits the locale (Pittsburgh's Hill District) and some of the characters from his 1995 drama, "Seven Guitars." Brian Stokes Mitchell leads the cast. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

LACKAWANNA BLUES

The prodigiously talented Ruben Santiago-Hudson (who won a basketful of awards several years ago for his performance in August Wilson's "Seven Guitars") tells the story of Nanny, the bighearted woman who helped raise him in an upstate boarding house, and the other characters who lived there: BeBop, Be-Bo, Cockeyed Shakey, John Bendover, Little Sonny, Big Sonny, Jaboe, Bo-Jack, Fat Daddy, et al. By turns poignant, passionate, and nostalgic, Santiago-Hudson blows haunting, evocative riffs on his harmonica, accompanied by the blues guitar of Bill Sim, Jr. The monologue is all about goodness, and Santiago-Hudson honors it with an excellence all his own. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

LOVE, JANIS

Randal Mylar's musical adaptation of the book of the same title, about the life of Janis Joplin. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

MNEMONIC

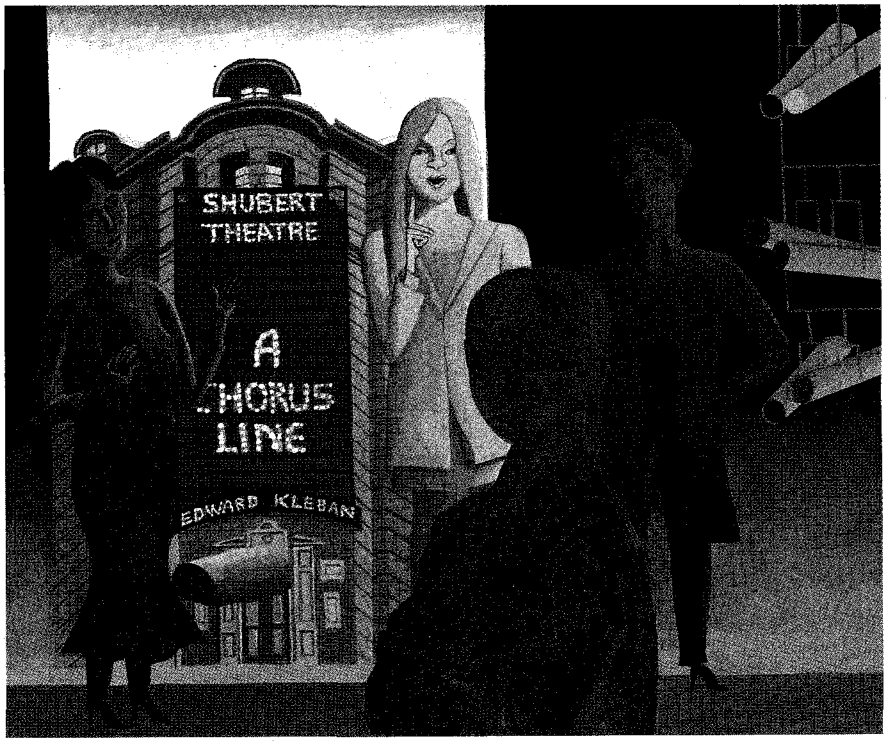
For sheer theatrical aplomb—the exhilarating marriage of the surreal body to the surreal intellect—nothing can top the latest show by the actor and director Simon McBurney and his Theatre de Complicite. With startling images, sounds, and shifts of focus, three stories unravel with the lucidity, the detachment, and the surprise of a Magritte to remind us that we ourselves are a work of fiction, and that remembering is an act of imagination. (4/9/01) (John Jay College, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. 239-6200.)

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

Dale Wasserman's severely dated adaptation of Ken Kesey's 1962 novel—a broad allegory, set in a mental hospital, about the perils of nonconformity—is a quaint relic, but as staged by Chicago's excellent Steppenwolf Theatre it's a well-acted one. Gary Sinise leads the cast, as the incorrigible mental patient Randle P. McMurphy. Terry Kinney is the director. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

PASSION PLAY

Peter Nichols' clear-eyed and witty 1981 drama about a long-married couple who become unhinged at the hands of a sexually aggressive younger woman has worn well over the years. The cast is excellent (Simon Jones and Leslie Lyles are particularly good) in this fine revival, which leaves you, however jaded you may be, feeling sadder but wiser about the inevitable perils of adultery. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100. Closes May 6.)



"A Class Act," a musical based on songs by the late Edward Kleban.

KATHY OSBORN

PEARL THEATRE COMPANY

Jean-François Regnard's 1708 comedy, "A Will of His Own," runs in repertory with preview performances of Racine's "Andromache," which opens May 7 at 7. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

A stage adaptation by Joe O'Byrne of Oscar Wilde's novel. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY

In Edward Albee's new play, an older couple provide a harsh taste of what life has in store for a young couple with a new baby: the ravages of adulthood, the tidal wave of troubles and injuries that come with time. Brian Murray and Marian Seldes, two veterans who are rarely less than riveting, make the most of Albee's sharp, enigmatic writing; their highly stylized, virtuosic performances here are stunning. David Esbjornson directed. (2/19 & 26/01) (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

THE PRODUCERS

Matthew Broderick and Nathan Lane star in Mel Brooks's musical version of his 1968 movie, under the direction of Susan Stroman. (Reviewed in this issue.) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

Rather than a revival of Richard O'Brien's 1973 musical, a glam tribute to fifties horror flicks, Christopher Ashley's production is an unsexy and oddly earnest homage to the 1975 cult-movie adaptation. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE

Lily Tomlin is back on Broadway in the one-woman, thirteen-character show written for her by her longtime collaborator, Jane Wagner, and what's not to love about that? Tomlin is terrific—moving, funny, and as lithe and vibrant as she was when she first performed the show here, fifteen years ago. This is a chance to see a remarkable life force in action. (11/27/00) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SEUSSICAL

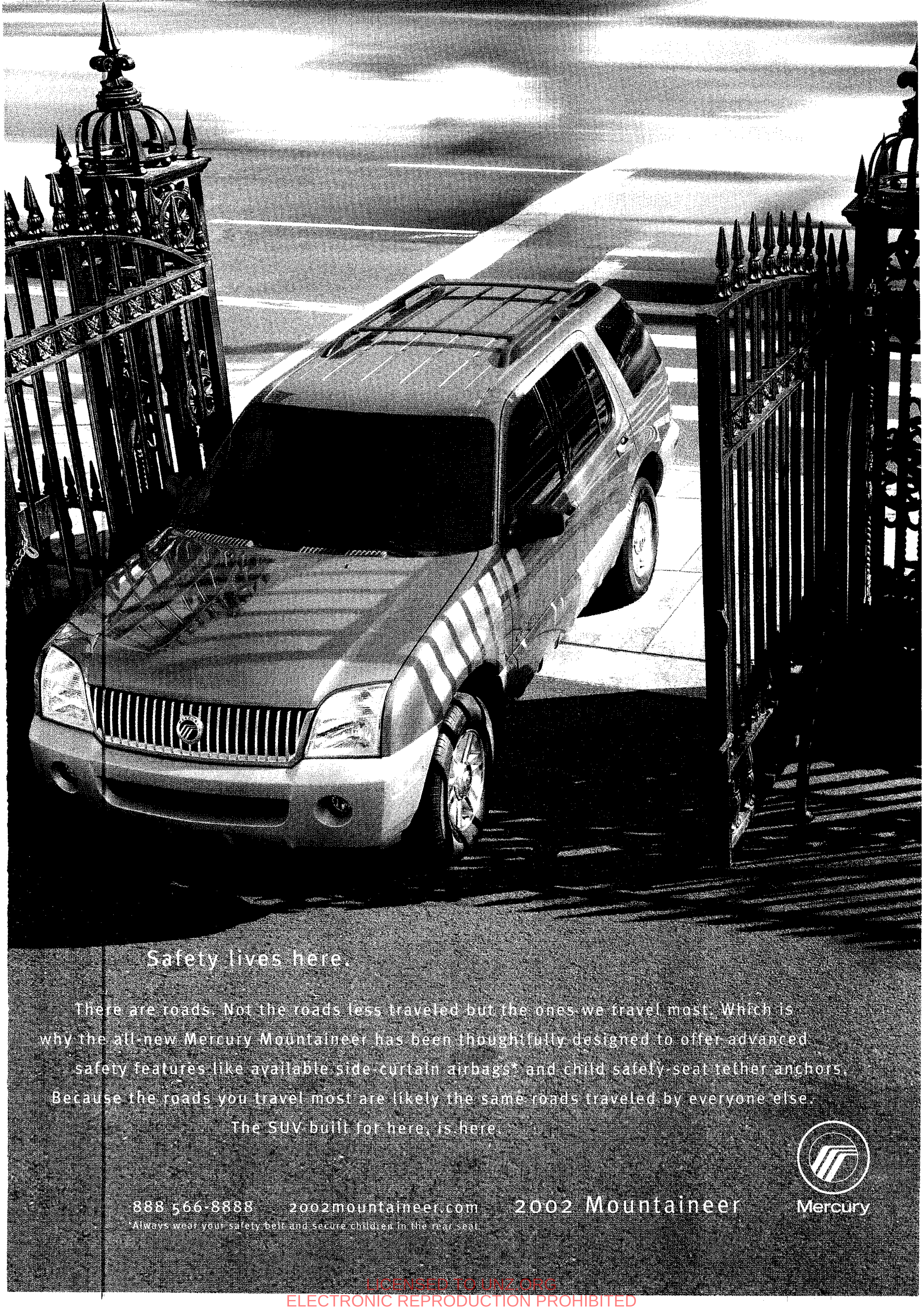
For all the whimsy of Theodor Geisel's doggerel, what's missing in this relentlessly cute musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty is mayhem and magic. It's a show with curiously little charm. (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

SINCERITY FOREVER

A Bat Theatre Company revival of Mac Wellman's 1991 play. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407. Closes May 26.)

A SKULL IN CONNEMARA

The middle play in Martin McDonagh's Leenane trilogy. Like the others, it is permeated by violence, decay, death, and humor—humor that, in this case, is predominantly of the patronizing, stage-Irish variety and saturated in alcohol. Gordon Edelstein directed. (3/5/01) (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)



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SO LONG AGO I CAN'T REMEMBER: A DIVINE COMEDY
The latest multimedia production by the troupe Gale Gates et al. takes its inspiration from Dante. (37 Main St., Brooklyn. 718-522-4597.)

STONES IN HIS POCKETS
Marie Jones's play, which began life in Belfast a couple of years ago, is set in an Irish village where a big-budget Hollywood movie is being made. Conleth Hill and Seán Campion play two extras in the movie and all thirteen other characters as well, including the movie's female star, its director, and various locals. Though the play has its clever ways when it comes to sending up both Hollywood and Irish mores, the stories being told here aren't anything you haven't seen before. Still, Hill and Campion, under the direction of Ian McElhinney, go at their parts with such relish that the evening has an almost vaudevillian theatricality about it. (4/16/01) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET
Shakespeare's play, adapted and directed by Peter Brook. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Closes May 6.)

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA
Theatre for a New Audience presents Shakespeare's play, under the direction of Sir Peter Hall. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200. Closes May 13.)

UNCLE BOB
In a new play by Austin Pendleton, George Morfogen portrays a man dying of AIDS and Gale Harold his homophobic nephew. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

THE DINNER PARTY
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.

FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.

KISS ME, KATE
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE MUSIC MAN
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.

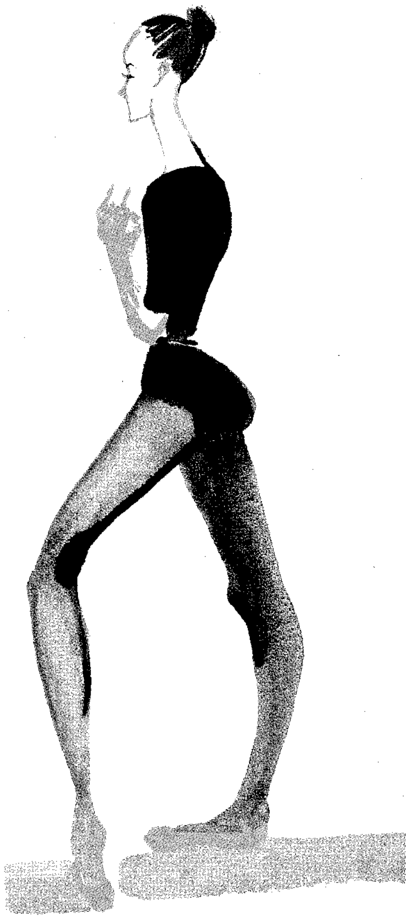
PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

THE SYRINGA TREE
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Jennie Somogyi does a lot of bravura jumping and spinning for the New York City Ballet because, she says with a sigh, "I can." But she most loves to perform in a lyrical and expansive key—"calm, and then like the wind," she says, or "moving through a thick cloud" in Balanchine's "The Four Temperaments." Somogyi, who is twenty-three and has been with the company since she was fifteen, seems always to be growing. Her long, tapered limbs radiate out from her torso, creating a negative space that is as vibrant and full as her own constant motion. "I'm not hitting positions," she says, with a bright, direct look. "I'm hearing the music, and the music isn't stopping." May 2 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Valse Triste," "Monumentum pro Gesualdo/Movements for Piano and Orchestra," and "The Four Seasons." ♦ May 3 at 8: "Ash," "Zakouski," "Tributary," and "The Four Temperaments." ♦ May 4 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Monumentum pro Gesualdo/Movement for Piano and Orchestra," "Duo Concertant," and "The Concert." ♦ May 5 at 2: "Tributary," "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," and "The Concert." ♦ May 5 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Zakouski," "Ash," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." ♦ May 6 at 3: "The Four Temperaments," "Tributary," and "The Four Seasons." ♦ May 8 at 8: "The Four Seasons," "Moves," and "The Concert." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through July 1.)



Jennie Somogyi, a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet.

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
May 1 and May 3 at 8 and May 2 at 2 and 8: "Gong," "Black Tuesday," and "The Brahms-Haydn Variations." ♦ May 4 and May 7-8 at 8 and May 5 at 2 and 8: "Cinderella." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through June 23.)

"LE JARDIN IO IO ITO ITO"
Compagnie Montalvo-Hervieu offers a sampler of minute-long overlapping solos by its ten members, performed in an array of styles (including Baroque, break dance, flamenco, circus, traditional Chinese) whose international range reminded the choreographer, José Montalvo, of his boyhood backyard fiestas in Spain and in the south of France. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 2 and May 4-5 at 7:30.)

BALLET PRELJOCAJ
The choreographer Angelin Preljocaj offers a full-length work, "Paysage Après la Bataille (Landscape After the Battle)," which imagines an encounter between Joseph Conrad and Marcel Duchamp and the resulting clash between the forces of intellect and wit. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 1-5 at 8 and May 6 at 2 and 7:30.)

COMPAGNIE AZANIE
Multicultural dance often makes for a bad stew—there's nothing in it that wouldn't do just as well on its own. But when the Franco-Cameroonian choreographer Fred Bendongué juxtaposes the undulating rhythms and torsos of native Cameroonian dance with the speedy attack of capoeira and the deep stillness of Butoh, the combined effect is mesmerizing and inexplicably sad. "D'Une Rive à l'Autre" starts with four long-limbed men bouncing up and down like cargo in a box. The propulsive drumming, lyrical cello, and melancholic concertina of the onstage musicians, along with Landy Andriamboavonjy's pure, soaring voice, carry the Lyon-based male troupe through meditative solos and feisty duets where they slowly find their land legs, their expressive trunks, and the particular inflection (Guadaloupean, Brazilian, Cameroonian, French) of each individual body. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. May 3-5 at 8:30 and May 6 at 7:30.)

"ZAP! ZAP! ZAP!"
The performer Blanca Li presents a series of connected sketches depicting an aging hippie, an ambitious gymnast, a quasi-intellectual modern dancer, and a folk dancer from Brittany, among others. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. May 2-4 at 8 and May 5 at 3 and 8.)

"TERRA SANCTUS"
The ten-member Omega Dance Company presents a selection of works in various sacred-dance traditions, including "Missa Luba," set to an African choral version of the traditional Mass; "The Creation Story," which portrays the God of Genesis as a woman; and an environmental warning, "In This Fateful Hour," set to a score played by the Native American flutist Dennis Yeary. (The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 581-1212. May 4-5 at 7:30.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

DAVID GRAY
This Welsh troubadour, who favors acoustic arrangements and gentle introspection, humbly plied his trade for the better part of the nineties before he finally cracked the U.S. pop charts, last year. "Babylon," his first and largest hit, augmented his soaring, Van Morrisonesque voice with a mildly skittering, drum-and-bass tempo. Thanks to his taste in up-to-date rhythms and his boyishly photogenic looks, he's the new king of adult alternative pop. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. May 3-4 at 8.)

"THE LATIN TINGE"
Tango rhythms have added a subtle and piquant flavor to jazz since its early days in New Orleans—Jelly Roll Morton referred to the style as a key element of true jazz. Little wonder, then, that the historically minded Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra goes straight to the source in these tango-jazz tributes, trading sets and collaborating with El Arranque, one of Argentina's foremost tango ensembles. The combined bands will also première a new work by the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. May 3 and May 5 at 8.) ♦ Wear appropriate shoes and arrive early to the dance concert on the off night: free beginners' tango lessons will be offered an hour before showtime. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 721-6500. May 4 at 8.)

BLINK 182
The safety-pinned old guard may sneer at Blink 182's punk-by-numbers pop, but that hasn't stopped millions of teens from lapping up the California trio's blissfully prurient juvenilia. Pairing lightweight power chords with potty humor has never proved so lucrative. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. May 4 at 7:30.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
May 4 at 8: A concert of Indian music, with Shivkumar Sharma and Zakir Hussian. ♦ May 5 at 8: The Iraqi classical singer Farida, backed by the Maqam Ensemble. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

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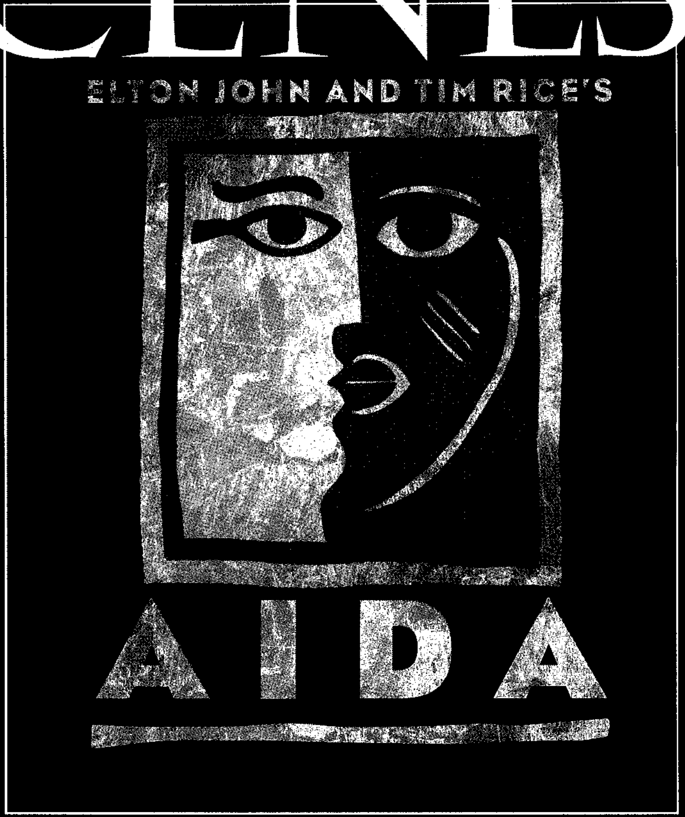
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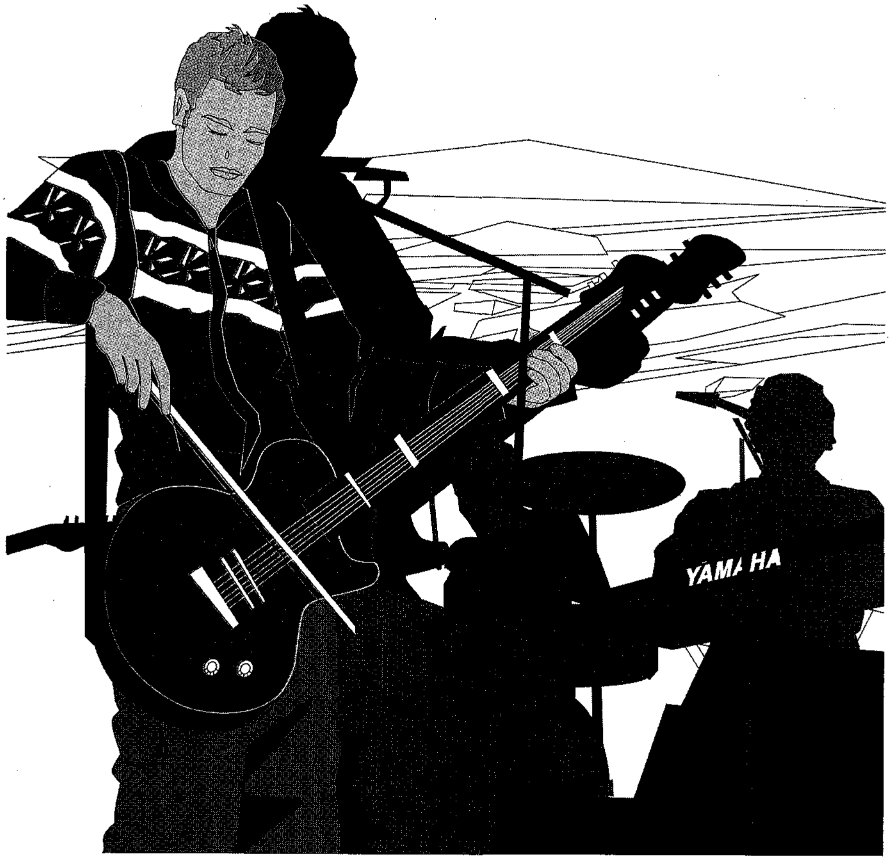


Jonsi, the lead guitarist and vocalist of the Icelandic ensemble Sigur Ros, at Irving Plaza.

ULLA PUGGARD

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—**Francis M'bappe,** a Cameroon native who moved to New York three years ago, has played bass with some of the biggest names in African music. With his FM Tribe band (here May 5) he brings to life the joyful rhythms of his homeland.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—May 3-5: Proudly unfettered by hipness, the **Charlie Daniels Band** keeps flying the flag of Southern rock. Expect cowboy hats, fiddle solos, woolly beards, and the Faustian parable of Johnny Reb defiance, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia."

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—May 8: The **Blind Boys of Alabama.** The tireless septuagenarian Clarence Fountain leads this pack of faithful singers, which was formed some sixty years ago at the Talladega Institute for the Deaf and Blind. If you've ever wondered what inspired James Brown, Sam Cooke, Ray Charles, and other secular stars, the gospel singer Fountain will show you. With guests **John Hammond, David Lindley, Charlie Musselwhite,** and **Danny Thompson.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—May 2: **Goldfrapp.** While comparisons to Portishead's haunting hybrid of noirish torch songs and kitschy spy themes abound, the British chanteuse Allison Goldfrapp's lustrous, honeyed voice could render even the most calloused cynic mute in a postcoital stupor. Cooing implausibly silken whispers over a cinematic array of sounds, Goldfrapp grabs the baton from Portishead's chilly grasp and runs with it. With the melodic electronica of **Plaid.** May 4-5: More British dance music with the Sheffield duo known as **Autechre.**

BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—May 3: The downtown New York City power trio **Shelby,** featuring Kenny Cummings on guitar and vocals, cranks out snappy pop songs that address such timeless subjects as lost love, desire, and the whereabouts of Loudon Wainwright. May 4: **Radio 4** does a fine job of updating the post-punk sounds of the Clash and Gang of Four.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—May 3-4: The Dayton-based combo **Guided by Voices** has grown up. Gone is the homemade sound of such early albums as "Bee Thousand" and "Alien Lane." The latest album from the lead songwriter Robert Pollard and his band of merry supporting musicians, "Isolation Drills," continues the trend toward polished, professional rock. Opening on the 3rd is **Spoon** (see Maxwell's). May 7: Britain's **Ocean Colour Scene** has morphed from shoe-gazing dream-popsters into sharp-dressed mods and finally into classic-rock grave robbers, but the band has yet to muster Stateside success beyond the adoration of a select group of Anglophiles. Touted by such impressionable friends as the members of Oasis and the ex-mod kingpin Paul Weller, the Scene now hopes that its traditional approach to the almighty riff will win over us Yanks. May 8: Rarely are the words "achingly beautiful" used with accuracy, but the phrase perfectly describes the music of the four-piece Icelandic ensemble **Sigur Ros.** Unlike godspeed you black emperor!, the Canadian wall-of-sound-crafting collective with which they are most often compared, Sigur Ros writes ten-minute-long symphonic pop compositions (overlaid with the otherworldly sound of a horsehair bow playing on an electric guitar) that have found the heart that's been missing in the current trend for epic instrumentation. The band's songs have actual lyrics, not samples of static-filled television audio tracks or random cell-phone calls but words full of deep and primordial emotions—even though only 275,277 people can understand them (275,276 fewer in some cases, as the lead singer, Jonsi, occasionally dips into a language of his own invention). ♦ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—May 2: The lonely lo-fi sounds of **Retsin.** May 3: **Jill Sobule,** a feisty post-punk feminist whose work brings to mind a cross between Liz Phair and Gertrude Stein. May 4: **Peaches** and **Chilly Gonzales.** Blame Canada. These two twisted geniuses from the Great North, both of whom now live in Germany, serve up lewdness with basement beats. Peaches, born Merrill Nisker, raps with almost pornographic assertiveness ("You like it when I like you less / no caress / just undress"), and Gonzales's shtick is founded on brilliant silliness. Last fall the pair opened for Elastica at the Bowery Ballroom, and the act included half-naked accomplices mixing it up onstage. You've been warned; there's no staying home.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—May 2: **Spoon,** an endearing trio out of Houston. Its latest release, "Girls Can Tell," is laden with cranky guitars, poppy organs, and careful songcraft. May 3: The loose sixties-style garage rock of the **Mooney Suzuki.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—May 5: **Drums and Tuba,** a highly infectious trio—tuba, drums, and guitar—which laces its loop-filled songs with New Orleans-style grooves and some progressive-rock guitar heroics.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7501)—May 2: **Marc Ribot y los Cubanos Postizos.** Appropriating the arrangements of Arsenio Rodriguez and other pre-Castro bandleaders, Ribot's "prosthetic" Cubans are a postmodern, post-Cold War pleasure.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—May 3-5: The **Dave Liebman** quartet. Leibman hasn't let the vicissitudes of the music industry or the fickleness of the listening public stop him from going about his business; that is, creating adventurous new music that explores all the nooks and crannies of the jazz tradition. One of the few truly individual post-Coltrane soprano saxophonists—and a fine tenorman and flutist as well—Leibman is also a conceptualist who puts as much thought into his ensembles as he puts into each gleaming solo. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through June 23, the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** is in attendance at the piano through June 23.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through May 6: The **Pat Martino** trio. His iconic stature now firmly established, this sleek and thoughtful guitarist has refined the knowledge and experience gained over four decades into a signature sound soaked with poetry. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through May 6: The **Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra.** Schneider, a Gil Evans disciple, is an ingenious orchestrator who weaves thick textures while reserving plenty of space for some choice soloists.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—May 4: The trumpeter **Malachi Thompson** plays in the intersection between high-energy free jazz and the outer reaches of more conventional forms. Another volatile player, the tenor saxophonist **Billy Harper,** will augment his Freebop Band, bringing passion and more than a little nineteen-sixties spirit to the proceedings.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—May 3-5: The **Leon Parker** ensemble. Having renounced his renunciation of mainstream jazz—he's back in pianist Jacky Terrasson's trio—

Parker is once again charging bandstands with his invigorating and inventive drumming. When it comes to his own music, though, Parker is a staunch individualist who's been known to incorporate vocals, hand and body percussion, and storytelling into the mix.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through May 6: For those who find Cassandra Wilson too moodily exotic, Diana Krall a bit distant and chilly, and such excellent veteran vocalists as Abbey Lincoln and Shirley Horn, well, too experienced, there's the fresh-faced **Jane Monheit.** The Long Island native has a sweet, sure voice and a taste for tried-and-true standards. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—William Blake (1757-1827) is best known as a poet, but his gifts as a visual artist were prodigious as well. Apprenticed to an engraver by the age of fifteen, he went on to develop an innovative printing technique (which he claimed came to him in a vision) that enabled him to self-publish such illuminated texts as "Songs of Innocence and Experience." The copper-etching plates and pages from the book cover one long wall of an extensive show that includes more than a hundred and seventy-five works. Through June 24. ♦ With fifteen paintings by Vermeer (and possibly a sixteenth, "Young Woman Seated at a Virginal," which has his luminously impersonal touch), five by the tragically short-lived Fabritius, who may have been his teacher, and ten by his great rival De Hooch, **"Vermeer and the Delft School"** offers an encyclopedic look at the milieu that formed the calmest genius of the seventeenth century. This is the Met at its best: a stately procession of masterpieces, accompanied by informative, sometimes tart commentary. Through May 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Van Gogh's Postman: The Portraits of Joseph Roulin"** is a refreshing antidote to blockbuster fever. This small show (five paintings and two drawings) reunites all but one of the portraits Van Gogh (1853-90) made of his friend and neighbor Joseph Roulin. Painted between the summer of 1888 (the infamous year of the ear) and the spring of 1889 (the year before the artist's death), the pictures grow increasingly stylized, culminating in the harmonious turbulence of the one portrait here which is part of MOMA's own collection. Through May 15. ♦ A retrospective exhibition of the radiant, mural-size color photographs of Andreas Gursky. Through May 15. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

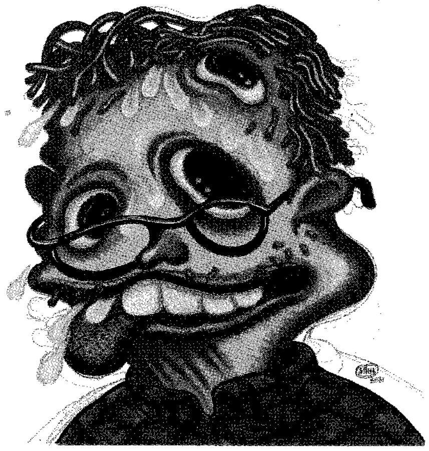
GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"BitStreams,"** the museum's survey of digitally enhanced art work, is an exercise in, and maybe a cure for, techno-optimism. The objects themselves—photographs, videos, digitally designed sculptures, and a generous sampling of sound works—are gimmicky and modest, especially compared to the infatuated descriptions in the wall texts that accompany them. Through June 10. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—It's hard to imagine a more eclectic exhibition than **"A Family Album: Brooklyn Collects,"** which culls art works from more than eighty lenders with ties to the borough. The premise may be a fund-raising ploy, but the result is anarchy of the finest calibre. Wandering from a Pontormo Madonna to a Balthus nymphet and from Chinese antiquities to central-Asian textiles, one feels happily bewildered by the diversity of aesthetic stimuli. Through July 1. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—A word to the smart: a half-mile south of the Met, where people swarm like ants at a picnic around the fifteen Vermeers in "Vermeer and the Delft School," the Frick has hung its three pictures by the Master for rarely crowded, easy looking. Only the large "Mistress and Maid," in which fresh mail arrives for a letter-writing woman, is topnotch. Its dark ground absorbs the magical glow that the woman's flesh and yellow jacket keep radiating. But "Officer and Laughing Girl" and "Girl Interrupted at Her Music," both set in the artist's familiar windowed corner, are a rewarding little pair. The first seems disagreeably glary until you realize that it depicts the direct rays of the setting sun. (The giddy couple will have to fumble for a lamp in a few minutes.) In the second, the pretty music student gazes out past us in pale light, conveying a morning mood of having all the time in the world. Like fractals, the slightest things in Vermeer can unfold the whole of his genius to a sufficiently patient viewer. Through May 27. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Luigi Ontani: 1965-2001."** Long before Cindy Sherman and Yasumasa Morimura turned their cameras on themselves, Ontani was his own biggest star, posing in annunciations, in flagrante delicto with Leda's swan, and in blue-tinted glory as Krishna. He appears more subtly in his more recent work: masks hanging over the gallery doors have his high cheekbones, as do a ceramic baby elephant and its human passengers. The best-known self-portrait here, his 1980 photograph "TulipanonelI'ANO," showing a tulip emerging at an insouciant angle from the artist's behind, eschews this fanfare for a comparatively spare look—it epitomizes the sense of humor that makes all this self-contemplation bearable. Through June 10. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)



"Self-Portrait (Sweat)," by Peter Saul, in "Self-Made Men," at DC Moore.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JOE ANDOE
The Tulsa-born artist might be a lackadaisical prairie version of George Stubbs. Like the English equine portraitist, Andoe paints horses and more horses, along with the occasional cow. But he doesn't have Stubbs's fanatical patience—or any patience at all, really. Instead he lays out big brushy fields that represent grassland, and drops a casual ruminant (or three or five) into them. The results are seductively drab and wistful, like a country song to which the singer has forgotten most of the lyrics. Through May 5. (Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888.)

DALE CHIHULY
Spotlit in a vast, darkened gallery, the glass master's latest glittering chandeliers and towers seem almost impossibly gaudy, like flora growing in the blackest reaches of the ocean. More unexpected for Chihuly are two walls of paintings on paper: their florid spatter patterns seem closer to Versace than to Pollock. Across the bottom of most sheets you can see a flowing, quasi-legible scrawl. Presumably, it's the artist's name, but it reads instead as "Ohhhh" or "Ahhhh"—either of which could stand as Chihuly's credo. Through May 5. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.)

WILL COTTON
More of the artist's slick vistas of sweets—Popsicles, chocolate bars, and layer cakes—melting under hot lights. Why, one wonders, are they so much more resistible than Wayne Thiebaud's equally unhealthy confections (due to appear in a Whitney retrospective in June)? The secret would seem to be in the presentation: Thiebaud serves up his treats with a gourmand's smile, Cotton with an ascetic's smirk. Through May 5. (Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929.)

ROXY PAINE
This Brooklyn artist divides his time between two entirely different pursuits: trompe-l'œil mushrooms and art-making machines. Here the machines take center stage. "PMU (Painting Manufacture Unit)" and "Drawing Machine" are de-luxe models, complete with flashing warning lights and glowing laptops. At prescribed intervals, nozzles whir into action and spurt a carefully programmed arc of paint or ink. The resulting objects are a little disappointing (think candle-making). It's the theatrical spectacle of the machinery and, lurking behind it, Paine's wry take on technology and creativity which linger in one's mind. Through May 5. (James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171.)

"SELF-MADE MEN"
This rambunctious show of self-portraits by fifty-four contemporary male painters and cartoonists, curated by Alexi Worth, suggests that both the self and the portrait are in sorry shape these days. Gazing at the outside of themselves from the inside, most of the painters either tilt toward numbed dissociation or, more often, undergo narcissistic giggling fits. Exceptions include the young Dutchman Philip Akkerman, with a wonderfully inhabited scowl, and good old Alex Katz, whose proposition of how a big-time urbane painter should look (in both senses) brooks no demurral. Through May 5. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

THE STUDIO SCHOOL AT BERGDORF'S
Art and commerce have always mingled happily on Fifty-seventh Street, but seldom as intimately as they do on the seventh floor of Bergdorf's this month, where charcoal "transcriptions" of scenes from the Hudson River school have been drawn directly onto the walls by students, staff, and alumni of the downtown art school. One of the best, Moriah Carlson's modernist version of a Jasper Cropsey painting, leads the eye across sloping Arcadian meadows to the rest rooms. Through May 9. (Bergdorf Goodman, Fifth Ave. at 58th St. 327-0785.)

Short List

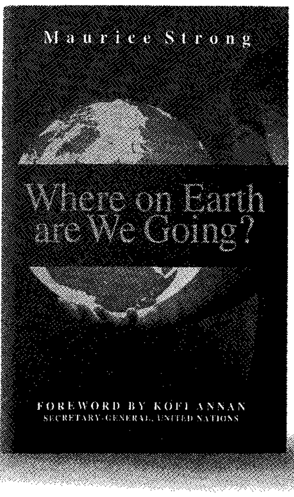
DEBORAH BARRETT
Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 861-7338.
Through May 25.

CLEVE GRAY
Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 744-2300.
Through May 12.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ROBERT BECK
This agile show of black-and-white drawings is an impressive balancing act, as the artist manages to be both conceptually cool and startlingly inti-

Entire governments are avoiding these issues. Thankfully, Maurice Strong isn't.


Maurice Strong
Where on Earth are We Going?
FOREWORD BY KOFI ANNAN
SECRETARY-GENERAL, UNITED NATIONS

"All of us will owe no small debt of gratitude to Maurice Strong." Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations. More at www.etexere.com

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mate. The scale shifts from small (notebook-size drawings reproducing children's psychological tests) to large (a newsprint photo of a teen-age killer rendered six feet high in pastel), but the immediacy of the impact never wavers. Most affecting is an eleven-foot charcoal of a rope animal trap, the center of its lasso as dark and empty as death. Through May 5. (CRG, 535 W. 22nd St. 966-4360.)

BARBARA BROUGHEL
Upon entering this elegant installation you may feel that you've stumbled on a natural-history museum in the heart of Chelsea. Along one wall, steel replicas of carnivorous plants (think Venus flytraps) are installed alongside delicate, detailed paintings on silk of such creatures as a prancing moth and "Humping Bee Killers." Across the room, a camera obscura made of pine invokes early scientific developments in optics and perspective, as does a wire grid of the sort used by Dürer to insure precise proportions. Through May 5. (Frederieke Taylor, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-0992.)

KRISTIN LUCAS
Magnetic personality takes on a new meaning in "Involuntary Reception," a deadpan video projection lampooning the alienation of cyber-culture. A young woman has a big problem: she's electromagnetically charged. She can't hold down a job (computer chips erase in her presence) or even go for a swim (like an electric eel, she'd be fine—it's others she's worried about). Lucas, who performs the talking-head monologue, has an irresistible, geeky pathos. Through May 5. (Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.)

Short List

RICHMOND BURTON
Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St.
242-7727. Through June 9.

SEAN LANDERS
Rosen, 524 W. 24th St. 627-6000.
Through May 19.

JOHN NEWMAN
Von Lintel & Nusser, 555 W. 25th St.
242-0599. Through May 26.

EBRU ÖZSEÇEN
Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 627-0974.
Through May 12.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

DIANA THATER
Imagine Eden in the back of an electronics store and you have some idea of this stilted series of video installations. In the front gallery, birds soar at your feet, displayed on monitors clustered on the gallery floor. In the back, gargantuan chrysanthemums are projected halfway up the walls in a corner of the room. Colored gels cover the lights, casting a blue glow (for the birds) or an orange one (for the blossoms). This glow is perhaps intended to underscore the artifice of representing nature. Instead, it conjures amateur theatrics. Through May 5. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

Short List

IDA APPLEBROOG
Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.
Through June 2.

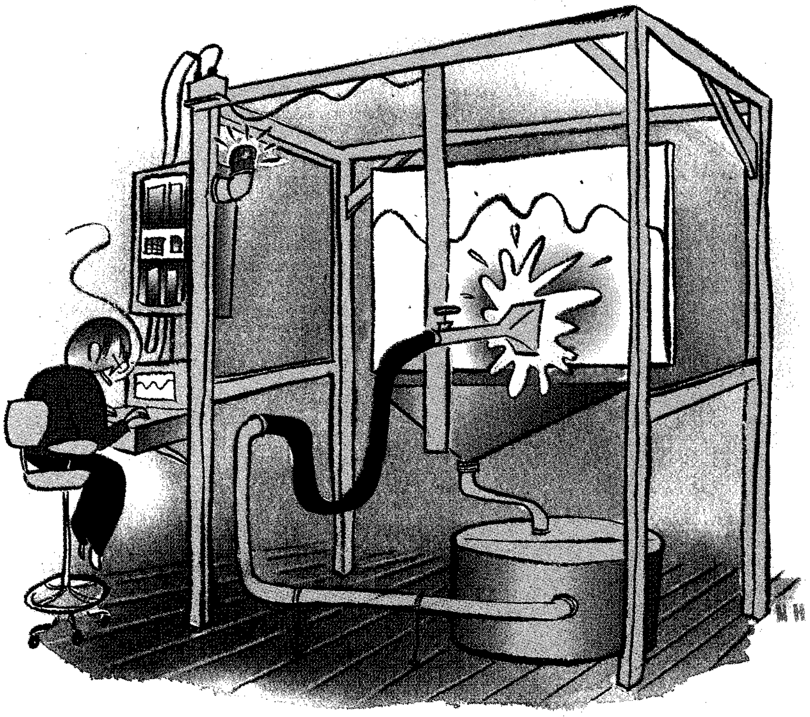
AUCTIONS & ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
May 4 at 10:15 A.M. and 2 and May 5 at 10:15 A.M.: A wide selection of prints from the late fifteenth century to the present day, featuring works by Dürer, Kollwitz, Chagall, Picasso, and Warhol (including complete portfolios of the "Marilyn" and "Mao" series, the first offered in its original corrugated-cardboard box). ◆ May 8 at 7 and May 9 at 10 A.M.: A sale of a hundred and thirty paintings, drawings, and sculptures from the collection of Stanley J.

Seeger, including work by Bacon (his triptych "Study of the Human Body"), Calder, Picasso, and Schiele. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

May 2 at 10 A.M.: Nineteenth-century European art, with an emphasis on the opulent paintings of artists such as Boldini, Bouguereau, and Alma-Tadema and the more idealistic creations of the Barbizon school, including works by Courbet, Jacque, Daubigny, and Diaz de la Peña. ♦ May 4 at 10 A.M. and 2: Fine wine. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)



Roxy Paine's "PMU (Painting Manufacture Unit)," at the James Cohan gallery (see Art).

MARCELLUS HALL

CHRISTIE'S EAST

May 4 at 10 A.M.: Whatever the future of classical music may be, it is reassuring that great musical instruments, at least, have an enduring mystique. This sale features a range of string instruments from the legendary Cremonese workshops of Nicolo Amati (Stradivari's teacher), Rugeri, and Storioni. More contemporary-minded collectors may be tempted by the selection of guitars and mandolins (including a rare Gibson Twin Six, ca. 1932). ♦ May 7 at 6: Fine wine. ♦ May 8 at 1: Impressionist and modern art. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

TARISIO

This new house, devoted exclusively to the sale of fine violins, violas, cellos, and bows, is presenting an exhibition of its offerings in advance of a forthcoming online sale. (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. May 2-3. 307-7224.)

PHILLIPS

May 7 at 7: After several months' hiatus, the up-and-coming auction house resumes its New York season with a sale of Impressionist and modern art; among the offerings are one of Cézanne's views of Mont Sainte-Victoire, from 1888-1890, and Van Gogh's "Le Jardin d'Automne." (3 W. 57th St. 570-4830.)

DOYLE

May 2-3 at 10 A.M.: Vintage couture, fine textiles, and accessories. The offerings include a wide range of Bakelite bracelets, Kashmiri shawls and bedcovers, and a 1962 Balenciaga ball gown of black gazar. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN

May 7 at 10:30 A.M.: Modernist posters, including work by such artists as Kokoschka, Larionov, Klutsis ("The USSR is the Avant Garde of the World Proletariat," from 1931), and Lester Beall ("Radio: Rural Electrification Administration," also from the nineteen-thirties). (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

BILL BRANDT

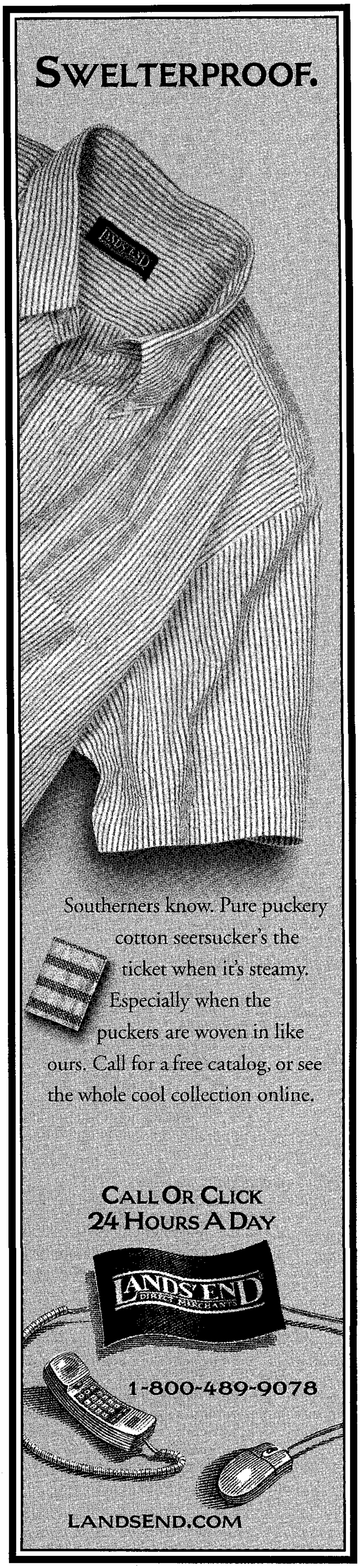
A retrospective of work by the English artist (1904-83) which includes some eighty examples of his early reportage and street photography, as well as his signature Surrealist nudes. The earliest images are theatrical studies: an off-balance Hungarian waving an empty bottle; a Spaniard kneeling like a saint; the artist's brother in top hat and tails, leaning drunkenly against a lamppost. The nudes, made using a large-format camera with a wide-angle lens, render the female body as a fleshy landscape, at once intimate and overwhelming. Through May 5. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

LEE FRIEDLANDER

The master of the American social landscape takes a stab at a more pedestrian application of his craft, the baby picture. "Grand Children" offers the expected settings (a bathtub, a lap, a living room) and protagonists (tots who grow into preteens), but the photographs are still classic Friedlanders, small moments of reverie trapped in subversive compositions. One image seems as inspired by the tiles in the center of its frame as by the bathing baby, who, by virtue of a well-placed mirror, appears at both its edges. The related show "Serial Portraits," at Andrea Rosen, offers forty-year visual time lines of Friedlander's family and artistic peers, including Garry Winogrand, John Szarkowski, R. B. Kitaj, and the artist's wife, Maria. Both shows through May 19. ("Grand Children": Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. "Serial Portraits": Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

JOCELYN LEE

Lee hides her models in plain sight, among man-made objects camouflaged to mimic the nature around them, placing a very pregnant nude on a floral-patterned couch surrounded by plants and showing a woman in a dappled red bikini against a sunset on the water. The best pictures here transform a subject completely, rendering humans as formless lumps of clay and endowing plants with personality. One image captures a gray-haired man asleep, his splotchy red face matching the flowered wallpaper behind him; another shows an unusual tree that, paradoxically, seems to have more energy. Through May 5. (LFL, 531 W. 26th St. 631-7700.)



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THOMAS ROMA
This densely packed survey of Roma's black-and-white photography centers on the artist's native Brooklyn. Though his settings and subjects shift from bathers at the Sunset Park public pool to people waiting in the purgatorial halls of a local courthouse, Roma's photographs are consistently charged with a bipolar mixture of sexiness and spirituality. A series of intimate images of ecstatic worshippers in Brooklyn churches are hung near a baptism-like scene from the public pool—a woman stands waist-deep in the water, looking down gently at a man who floats, eyes closed, in her arms. Additional work from Sicily and from an abandoned prison in Holmsburg, Pennsylvania, is included. Through May 5. (Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434.)

"SUN PICTURES"
This exhibit of mid-nineteenth-century British paper negatives documents the dawn of photography's now definitive multiple prints—earlier daguerreotypes were unique, irreplaceable artifacts. Technical studies like William Fox Talbot's "Facsimile of an Old Printed Page" (ca. 1839) lead into the nascent travel photography of the eighteen-fifties. Every time the eye is almost accustomed to seeing things in reverse, along comes a black church with glowing white windows or a grove of white palm trees against a black sky to deliver a shock. Through May 4. (Kraus, 25 E. 77th St. 794-2064.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Kiki Smith's "Telling Tales" parses fairy stories and childhood myths via photography, sculpture, and video. Hans Bellmer's ever-reassembled dolls and a collection of Victorian daguerreotype portraits of male friends—some of whom look to modern eyes like couples—are also on show. All shows at the Center's Midtown space through June 10. ♦ A survey of Mary Ellen Mark's work will be the last exhibit to appear in the Uptown galleries, which will close with the show on June 16. (Uptown: 1130 Fifth Ave., at 93rd St. Midtown: 1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

LEWIS BALZ / MARK POWER
Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.
Both shows through May 12.

CHARLES HARBUTT / MAGGIE TAYLOR
Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.
Both shows through May 19.

JOHN YANG
Stevenson, 338 W. 23rd St. 352-0070.
Through May 15.

See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

LITTLE ORCHESTRA SOCIETY
Dino Anagnost conducts a rare revival of Victor Herbert's 1905 operetta **"Mlle Modiste"** in a semi-staged production, with the singers Jane Thorngren, Philip Cokorinos, and John Garrison. Concert works by Herbert fill out the program. (Alice Tully Hall. 971-9500. May 2 at 7:30.)

SHORT SCORES
Symphony Space hosts the inaugural presentation of a new public-radio music-theatre series, modelled on the hit series "Selected Shorts." Among the four short, fully staged works are two premières; Chase Pamela Morrison's **"Women of the Lighthouse"** and **"Yma Dream,"** with music by Lanny Meyers and a libretto by Thomas Meehan (co-writer of the musical "The Producers") based on his humor piece of the same name, which originally appeared in this magazine in 1962. (Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 2 at 8.)

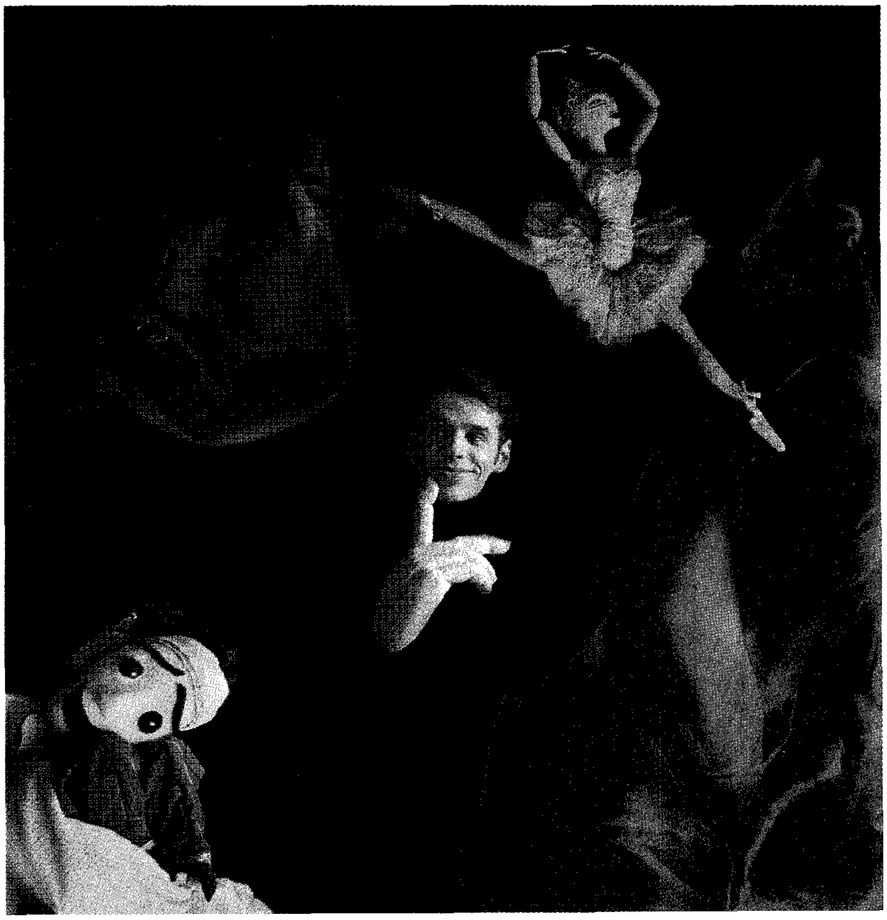
AMATO OPERA
The last three performances of **"Don Giovanni,"** offered in the company's intimate downtown theatre. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery. 228-8200. May 4-5 at 7:30 and May 6 at 2:30.)

NEW YORK GRAND OPERA
The company, conducted by the indefatigable Vincent La Selva, presents a fully staged performance of **"Tosca."** Judith Von Hauser, Chris Owen, and Michael Corvino take the leading roles. (Flushing Town Hall Theatre, Northern Boulevard at Linden Place, Queens. 718-463-7700, ext. 222. May 6 at 2.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
As part of its four-concert observance of the fiftieth anniversary of Arnold Schoenberg's death, the Philharmonic offers just the little "Accompaniment to a Film Scene," a quick Expressionist apéritif. The real attraction, however, is a rare appearance by Martha Argerich, who performs the Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 2 in collaboration with her former husband, Charles Dutoit. The rest of the program consists of music by Debussy and Ravel (the Suite No. 2 from "Daphnis et Chloé"), prime Dutoit territory and far away from the challenging sounds of the Second Viennese School. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. May 3 and May 5 at 8, May 4 at 11 A.M., and May 8 at 7:30.)

ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS OF THE CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA
Kent Tritle directs music by Mozart, Haydn (the "Harmoniemesse"), and Beethoven (the "Choral Fantasy," with the pianist Claude Frank). (Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. May 2 at 8.)



Basil Twist stages Stravinsky's "Petrushka" at Lincoln Center, beginning May 2.

JOSEF ASTOR

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Seiji Ozawa conducts Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 and selections from Mahler's "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" (with the baritone Thomas Hampson). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 2-3 at 8.)

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS
The conductor Colin Davis brings his three-concert Czech series to a close. Dvořák's folksy Violin Concerto, now a repertory staple, was once something of a rarity; the incandescent Sarah Chang will try to make it new. A more sly and subtle Dvořák can be heard in the "Scherzo Capriccioso," which begins the program; it closes with three tone poems from Smetana's "Má Vlast," the wellspring of modern Czech music. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. May 2 at 7:30.) ♦ The L.S.O. Chorus, in New York for the first time, will also present two concerts on its own. May 3 at 1: An Anglo-American program, including works by Copland and Gibbons. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 5 at 8: An all-Czech program of music by Dvořák, Janáček, Martinů, and others. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 721-6500.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
Schoenberg's name is infamous for scaring audiences away, but listeners need not fear the sounds of "Gurrelieder," the massive Wagnerian oratorio he completed in 1911; James Levine's mounting of the work is a superbly appropriate tribute for the fiftieth anniversary of the composer's death. The Met's orchestra and chorus are joined by an impressive lineup of vocal soloists, including Deborah Voigt, Ben Heppner, and the veteran tenor Ernst Haefliger, who serves as the Narrator. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 6 at 3.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY
Music by Haydn (the Symphony No. 88), Popper, Fibich, and Saint-Saëns (including the fantasy "Africa," with the pianist Richard Bishop). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 799-1259. May 7 at 2 and 7 and May 8 at 8.)

GREGG SMITH'S "EARTH REQUIEM"
Smith, longtime director of the Gregg Smith Singers, conducts the Ibex Orchestra and a chorus of a hundred and seventy in the New York première of his "Earth Requiem" (commissioned by the National Cathedral Choral Society), which employs excerpts from the Mass for the Dead, poetry by Hopkins and Whitman, and Native American texts. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 914-376-8899. May 8 at 8:30.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The soprano Lauren Flanigan joins the ensemble for several of Canteloube's "Songs of the Auvergne." Mendelssohn's "Hebrides" Overture and "Prague Suite," by Dvořák—an Orpheus arrangement of the String Quintet in G Major, Op. 77—complete the program. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 8 at 8.)

RECITALS

BASIL TWIST: STRAVINSKY'S "PETRUSHKA"
Two years ago the puppeteer Basil Twist's setting of Berlioz's "Symphonie Fantastique" in a five-hundred-gallon water tank made an aqua-balletic splash; now, as part of Lincoln Center's ongoing "Focus on Stravinsky," he re-creates the composer's classic ballet—another tale of doomed love and ghostly transformation—using elements of Czech and Japanese puppetry. The Russian-American duo-pianists Julia and Irina Elkina play a reduction of the orchestral score. (Clark Studio Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., 7th floor. 721-6500. May 2-4 at 8, May 5 at 3 and 8, and May 6 at 3 and 7. ♦ **Note:** Lincoln Center also offers a number of films relating to Stravinsky at the Walter Reade Theatre on May 5-6, including a production of "Oedipus Rex" by Julie Taymor, one of Twist's mentors.)

HUBERMAN STRING QUARTET
The young Israeli quartet makes its Carnegie Hall début with a program of Mozart, Webern, Brahms, and Oded Zehavi (the première of his String Quartet No. 1). (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. May 2 at 8.)

NEW YORK PHILOMUSICA
The music of Schubert is the focus for the ensemble's final concert of the season: the "Trout" Quintet concludes the program, which begins with John Harbison's piano quartet "November 19, 1828," a "hallucination" of Schubert's last night on earth. Songs by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich ("Passages," settings of poems by A. R. Ammons, with the mezzo-soprano Janice Felty) are performed in between. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. May 3 at 8.)

SARA DAVIS BUECHNER
Miller Theatre's "Bach and the 20th Century" series comes to a close, with the pianist pairing preludes and fugues from "The Well-Tempered Clavier" with those by the jazz-influenced composer Henry Martin. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. May 3 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
May 3-4 at 7:30: A program of Bloch, Fauré, and Taneyev (the Piano Quartet in E Major), featuring the pianist Randall Hodgkinson and the violist Paul Neubauer. ♦ May 5 at 7:30 and May 6 at 4: An all-Russian program of songs and pieces by Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Rachmaninoff; the musicians include the mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger, the flutist Carol Wincenc, and the cellist Peter Wiley. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

ANTHONY DE MARE
The uninhibited pianist (who appeared bare-chested on a recent CD cover) has built a strong reputation as a performer of American avant-garde music; in a show entitled "Playing with MySelf," he blends some favorite pieces (by Cage, Cowell, Frederick Rzewski, and Bernadette Speach, among others) into a seventy-five-minute, two-act narrative exploring his relationship with his chosen instrument. De Mare sings, acts, and tap-dances, too; the evening is directed by Sal Trapani. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. May 3-5 at 8:30 and May 6 at 3.)

OLGA BORODINA
The mezzo-soprano makes her Carnegie Hall recital début in a program of works by Falla and Mahler (the "Rückert Lieder") and Russian songs. The pianist is James Levine. (247-7800. May 4 at 7:30.)

JOHN RELYEA AND WARREN JONES
The bass-baritone (making his New York recital début) and the pianist perform songs by Caldara, Ives, Ibert (the "Chansons de Don Quichotte"), and Tchaikovsky. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 4 at 8.)

Willa Cather's
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MARGARET LANCASTER
The flutist, who favors a Bond-girl look, likes way-out repertory, and plays the piccolo, too, is about as far from the conservative James Galway model as one could get. Her solo show at the Cutting Room includes music by Larry Polansky, Paul Reller ("In Praise of Buddy Hackett," for flute and audiotape), and Eric Lyon. (19 W. 24th St. 691-1900. May 4 at 8.)

GUARNERI STRING QUARTET
Quartets by Haydn, Kodály, and Beethoven (the "Grosse Fuge"). (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. May 5 at 8.)

LORRAINE HUNT LIEBERSON
Judith Gordon accompanies the mezzo-soprano in a program of works by Handel, Schumann, and her husband, Peter Lieberson. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. May 6 at 2.)

TAIMUR SULLIVAN AND MARILYN NONKEN
The saxophonist and the pianist offer a recital of works by Milton Babbitt, Martin Bresnick, Alvin Lucier, and others. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 226-2407. May 7 at 7:30.)

SILENCED VOICES: MUSIC OF THE HOLOCAUST
The Hawthorne String Quartet plays music by Schulhoff, Ullmann, and other composers who were interned at the Terezín concentration camp. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. May 7 at 7:30.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
The Emerson String Quartet is the core ensemble for an all-Brahms program, featuring the String Sextet No. 1 and the Clarinet Quintet (with David Shifrin). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. May 6 at 5 and May 8 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"TIME AFTER, TIME ALONG, THE RIVER"
The Swiss artist Marie José Burki recently spent three years filming the people who live and work and play near the Hudson River, and she has created a ninety-minute film that will be projected twice each evening against the Holland Tunnel ventilation building at the end of Pier 34, at Canal Street. Burki worked with a special camera that creates three minutes of movie for every two seconds of film shot, so the piece, when projected, moves glacially. In a separate but related work, Burki interviewed the eighty subjects in her film and recorded their voices on compact disk as they recited, in list form, the names of other people they know who work on the river, the species of plants and animals they've seen near the water, and the names of other rivers around the world. (May 5-13, starting at dusk. For information about where along the riverside to pick up a CD, call 431-7165.)

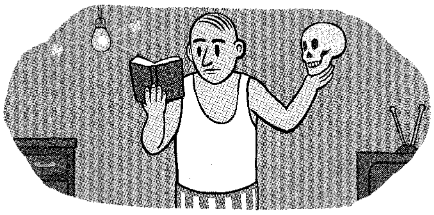
READINGS
May 2 at 8: By the poets Eleni Sikelianos and Tony Towle. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ May 3 at 7:30: By Padgett Powell, from his novel "Mrs. Hollingsworth's Men." (Community Bookstore, 143 Seventh Ave., Brooklyn. 718-783-3075.) ♦ May 3 at 7:30: By Yusef Komunyakaa, Tony Hoagland, and Jason Shinder, from their poetry about being men. (Makor, 35 W. 67th St. 601-1000.) ♦ May 7 at 7:30: By the actor Robert Sean Leonard, from "The Selected Letters of Tennessee Williams, Vol. 1: 1920-1945." (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 399-3030.)

TALK
May 7 at 6:30: The author Frank McCourt moderates a panel discussion about second acts in American literary life with the writers James McBride, Erica Jong, Mary Karr, and Mitch Albom. (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 594-7931.)

TOURS
May 2 at 10 A.M.: The Regional Plan Association offers a walking tour of Governor's Island. (For more information, call 253-2727, ext. 393.) ♦ May 5 at 7:30 A.M.: The public-advocacy group Shorewalkers presents the Great Saunter, its annual thirty-two-mile circumnavigation of Manhattan, starting at the corner of Fulton and Water Sts. (For more information, call 330-7686.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Waiting in the Wings



Some of the best backstage memoirs are written not by stars but by actors who toil at the edge of the limelight. In **ADVENTURES OF A NO NAME ACTOR** (forthcoming from Bloomsbury), Marco Perella, a not quite famous face with a résumé of small parts in feature films and larger parts in TV movies, recounts how he has built a career playing evildoers on the sometimes sleepy Texas movie circuit. And thanks to a stint on the PBS series "Wishbone," which chronicles the exploits of a particularly literary Jack Russell terrier, Perella can boast, "I have a big fan base of five-to-ten-year-olds."

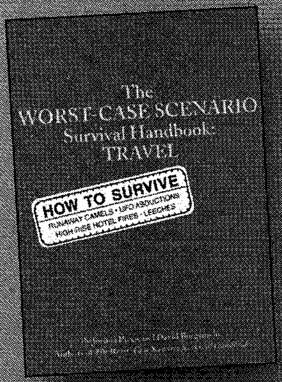
The New York-based writer Henry Alford came to the acting game late; he was in his mid-thirties when he decided that his future lay in performing. In **BIG KISS** (Villard), Alford narrates his efforts to get up to speed, including a summer at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, where he was instructed never to claim he had been "trained at RADA"; his sojourn at improv camp, where he was upstaged by his mother; and a soap-opera class, which "weekly afforded the opportunity to be intense and nostrilly."

Perhaps the only people willing to put themselves through greater hardship than aspiring actors are aspiring directors. In **KING OF CANNES** (Algonquin), the BBC filmmaker Stephen Walker describes his struggle to make a documentary about four first-time directors at the festival in southern France. One of them almost ends up in jail, but for the most part, fortune is kind to the newcomers. This makes them stand out in a town where the streets are literally strewn with discarded dreams. During festival time, it is said, an enormous dump truck cruises the sea front, collecting thousands of unread scripts from the sidewalks.

—*William Cohen*

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

BECAUSE THINGS HAPPEN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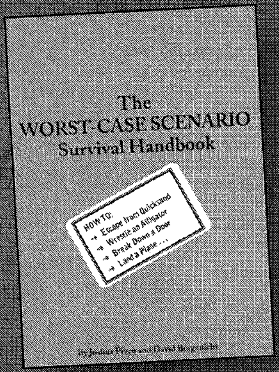
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MOVIES OPENING

EUREKA
A three-hour-plus drama, shot in black-and-white, about a bus hijacking and the driver's attempt to reconcile with his estranged family. Directed by Shinji Aoyama. In Japanese. Opening May 4. (State.)

ICE FROM THE SUN
Eric Stanze directed this punk art film, in which a wizard creates a parallel universe encased in ice. Opening May 4.

THE MUMMY RETURNS
Im-Ho-Tep the mummy is shipped to a museum in London, where he awakes and once again creates havoc. With Arnold Vosloo, Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, and Dwayne Johnson. Written and directed by Stephen Sommers. Opening May 4.

PAVILION OF WOMEN
Forbidden love blossoms when a Chinese matron (Luo Yan) begins to take English lessons from a priest (Willem Dafoe), in this historical drama directed by Yim Ho. Opening May 4.

UNDER THE SAND
In François Ozon's latest film, Charlotte Rampling plays a Parisian woman whose husband (Bruno Cremer) disappears without a trace. In French. Opening May 4.

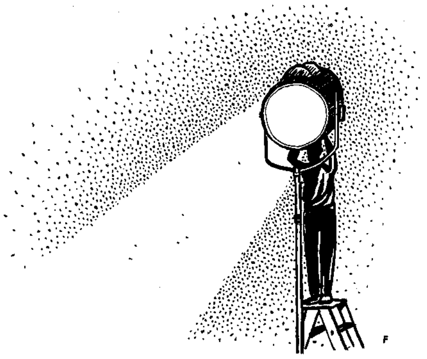
THE YOUNG GIRL AND THE MONSOON
A drama about a fortyish New Yorker (Terry Kinney) whose life is upended when his teen-age daughter moves in. Written and directed by the playwright James Ryan. Opening May 4.

FILM NOTES

AMORES PERROS
This three-part tale, the début directorial effort of Alejandro González Iñárritu, gives you a pretty good idea of what life is like in Mexico City and an enduring wish never to drive its streets at rush hour. The first section chronicles the near-incestuous affair between Octavio (Gael García Bernal) and his sister-in-law Susana (Vanessa Bauche). The second, which sags with weary symbolism, is about a model who loses a leg. The third and strongest tells of an ex-terrorist and tramp (Emilio Echevarría). The connective tissue between these folks is a car crash, and each of them also either owns or trains dogs. (If your taste in movies doesn't run to pooches with bloody flanks and broken necks, you should probably stay away.) Iñárritu's style may be heated and hectic, but he doesn't bully you into judging these frazzled figures, and, in Echevarría, he has found a figure of great and grimy nobility. In Spanish.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/2/01.) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

BLOW
The story of George Jung—a Massachusetts man who sold the Medellín cartel's cocaine to mainstream America in the seventies—would seem to offer a perfect star vehicle for Johnny Depp, but the unconvincing narrative doesn't allow him to shape a performance. The director, Ted Demme, and the screenwriters, David McKenna and Nick Cassavetes, tell the story of George's rise as a series of semi-comic riffs on his unwittingness—how casually he operated, how oblivious he was to risk and treachery on all sides. The scenes are flimsily staged—thin and underdone. Now and then Demme throws in the towel and resorts to a rapid montage of shots meant to convey the giddy drug life, but this isn't directing; it's more like flinging a loosely pasted scrapbook onto the floor and asking the audience to sort it out.—*David Denby* (4/9/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Cinema II, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

BLOW OUT
Brian De Palma's 1981 film is hallucinatory, and it has a dreamlike clarity and inevitability, but you'll never make the mistake of thinking it's only a dream. John Travolta is Jack, a sound-effects man who happens to record the noise of a car speeding across a bridge, a shot, a blowout, and the crash of the car into the water below. The driver—the governor who is the most popular candidate for the Presidency—is dead, but Jack is able to rescue the governor's passenger, a cuddly blonde (Nancy Allen). Playing an adult (his first), and an intelligent one at that, Travolta has a vibrating physical sensitivity, and Nancy Allen, who gives her role a flirty iridescence, is equally vivid. It's a great movie (and probably the best of all American conspiracy movies).—*Pauline Kael* (American Museum of the Moving Image; May 5.)



BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY
Helen Fielding's creation has finally arrived onscreen; in place of her wiry, worried tone we now find an almost confident pleasure in mishaps and man-hunting. The director, Sharon Maguire, has shaped the fretful original into a basic romantic comedy, leaving an aching Bridget (Renée Zellweger) with a choice of nice Mr. Darcy (Colin Firth) or dastardly Daniel Cleaver (Hugh Grant). These three leads are much better than the movie they front; some of the secondary characters are dangerously thin, although Jim Broadbent is as crumpled and reliable as ever in the role of our heroine's dad. Bridget mania, meanwhile, shows no signs of abating, but one hopes that this film might herald the end of the affair; after all, self-pity has its limitations as the engine of drama, and the idea that a young woman might be not just unhappy but somehow incomplete without a man would have struck even Jane Austen as laughably passé.—*A.L.* (4/16/01) (Battery Park 16, Cinema I, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE CENTER OF THE WORLD
Explicit, eyeglass-fogging sexual games from the director Wayne Wang. A nerdy, rich Silicon Valley computer engineer, Richard (Peter Sarsgaard), pays the beautiful freckle-faced stripper Florence (Molly Parker) to accompany him to Las Vegas for a three-day weekend. She agrees but with many conditions (no kissing on the lips, no penetration, strictly limited business hours). Richard is paying, but he wants feeling and emotion; Florence wants nothing but control. The movie, shot with a hand-held digital camera, has a dreamy surface and the aura of a reverie, but there's also a bit of suspense floating in the erotic cloud: will Richard get Florence to respond to him? A friend of Florence's named Jerri (Carla Gugino), who is her opposite in every way—dark, fleshy, needy—threatens to take the movie to a dangerous place, but she storms off, leaving the two inarticulate principals to mop up. Written by Ellen Benjamin Wong, working from a story by Paul Auster, Siri Hustvedt, Miranda July, and Wang.—*D.D.* (4/23 & 30/01) (Angelika Film Center.)

CHOPPER
The tale of a brute and a braggart, all the more daunting for being drawn from life; Mark Brandon Read (Eric Bana), lovingly known as Chopper, was one of the most outlandishly violent—and certainly most famous—prisoners in Australia's jails. Andrew Dominik's movie tracks him from the late nineteen-seventies to the early nineties, watching him make and remake enemies while cleaving ominously to old friends. The film steps up to its neck in blood, yet it's hardly your standard exploitation flick. Chopper may be exploiting the prison system, and the media have fun exploiting his legend, but there is also a strain of comic independence in the man, and the picture ends up as a thoroughly Australian, if discordant, hymn to the peculiar virtues of mateship. Chopper, for some unfathomable reason, is still alive.—*A.L.* (4/16/01) (Film Forum.)

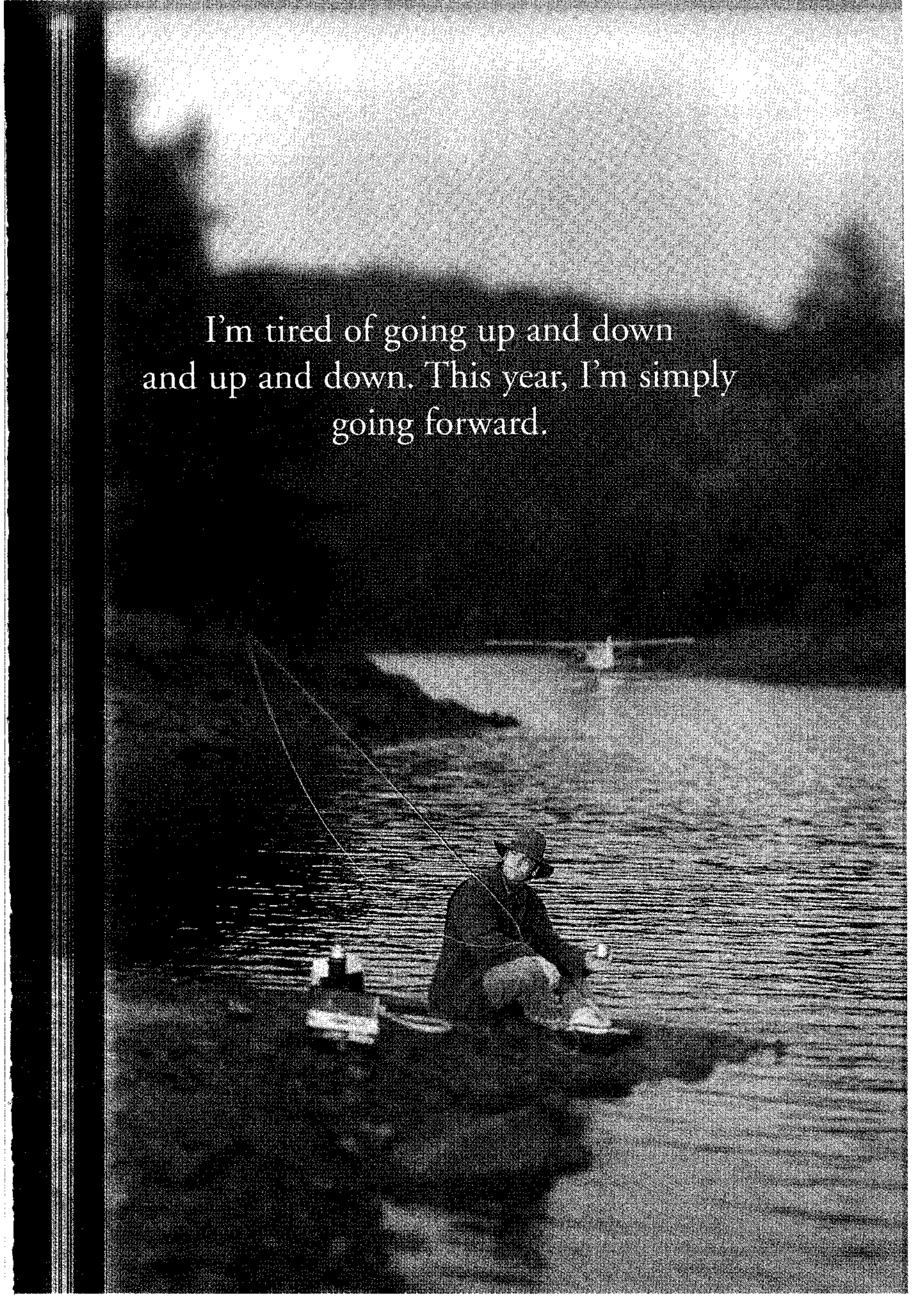
THE CIRCLE
Anonymous women on the streets of Teheran crouch alongside cars to avoid police, dart down alleys, and flee from dangerous places with black chadors held over their heads, as if flying under dark wings. At first, we may be puzzled by the frenetic rushing about—the women, seen one or two at a time, don't seem to have any clear goal. But after a while, we realize that this is exactly the point. They have either spent time in prison or are heading straight there, and they are looking for a place to hide in a society in which single women have no more than provisional legitimacy as citizens. The director, Jafar Panahi, offers echoes of the Italian neorealist cinema in the general forlornness and pained humanism of his approach, but he's created aesthetic strategies all his own. Despite a longueur here and there, the cumulative power of "The Circle" is extraordinary. In Farsi.—*D.D.* (4/23 & 30/01) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE DAY I BECAME A WOMAN
In order to elude censorship, the Iranian filmmaker Marzieh Meshkini made three short films (script approval is not required for shorts) and then combined them into a feature. Even with this strategy, she cloaks her intentions in alluring, suggestive imagery. The three sections present allegories for the stages of a woman's life. The first gets its power from its circumstances—the last hour of childhood before a nine-year-old girl must wear a chador. More thrilling and desperate is the second, in which a young woman on a bicycle is fleeing from her husband on horseback. The third episode, about old age, tells of a widow's bemused shopping spree and extends the mysteries of the first two. It's a film without speechifying or conclusions, but that's hardly a deficit—the unformed quality is faithful to the film's portrait of Iranian women in difficult transition. In Farsi.—*Michael Agger* (Cinema Village.)

ENEMY AT THE GATES
During the siege of Stalingrad, two snipers—an innocent Red Army peasant from the Urals (Jude Law) and an aristocratic Nazi deer hunter (Ed Harris)—stalk each other in the mucky ruins. This elaborate duel might have been perversely interesting as a kind of military sick joke if the absurdity of it were the point. But the director Jean-Jacques Annaud and his long-time collaborator, the producer-writer Alain Godard, make it seem like the entire battle hinged on the struggle between the two specialists, and the story rapidly loses common sense.—*D.D.* (3/26/01) (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Kips Bay Theatre.)

GREETINGS
A pleasantly tawdry mixture of an underground film, a skin flick, and a college revue, with a draft-evader hero and good-humored, casually obscene performances from a whole gallery of talented actors, including Robert De Niro, Jonathan Warden, Gerrit Graham, and Allen Garfield. Directed, edited, and co-written by Brian De Palma, who made it in 1968 on a shoestring budget.—*P.K.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; May 5.)

FREDDY GOT FINGERED
The method of freak-out comedian Tom Green, here directing his first movie, is pretty simple: he takes the things that people regard as sacred—pregnant women, defenseless children, the father-son relationship—and savages them like a cable-comedy-show Buñuel. Green gives us burlesque cruelties, put-on sex, ketchupy blood showers, and lots of American cheese in revolting slices. After a while, you know what's coming, and Green's outrages turn out to be shocking not because they're vicious and profane but because they're so badly staged. The film has been described in some quarters as a work of art, but it doesn't have any aesthetic qualities that one could point to: it's madly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NYFF51

egotistical, rhythmless, badly lit, terribly edited. Green seems to be daring people to leave, an act of bravado that's not necessarily a sign of talent. With Rip Torn.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE GOLDEN BOWL

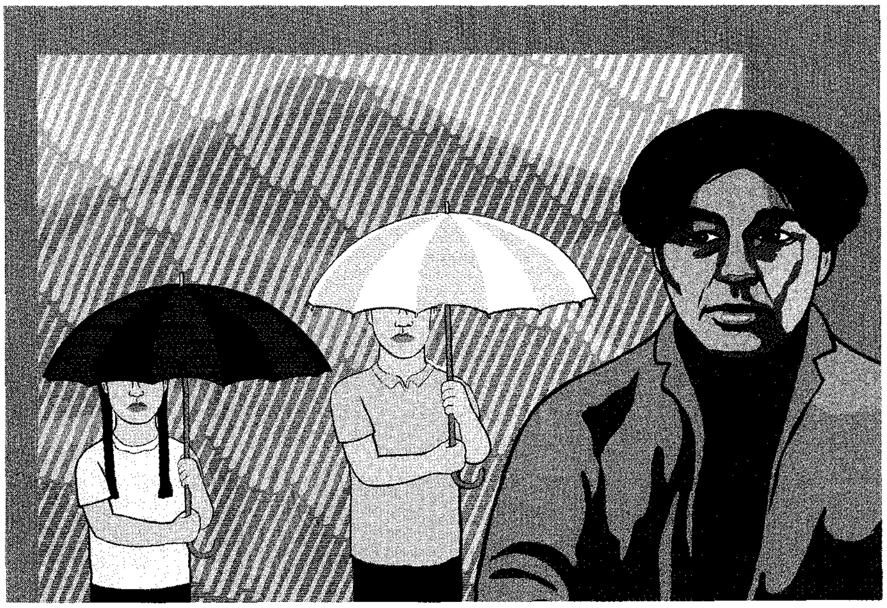
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Paris.)

HEARTBREAKERS

A comedy that has a neat premise, but which is no more than occasionally funny. Max (Sigourney Weaver) and Page (Jennifer Love Hewitt) are a mother-daughter confidence team. Max lures men into marriage, and the libidinous Page leads them into adultery, which gives Max grounds for highly advantageous divorce settlements. Weaver, as willful as always, proves that at fifty-one she can play a femme fatale but not that she can do it with delight. She's been bizarrely matched up with Hewitt—all high round breasts and swivelling rear—who darts here and there and speaks in a soul-curdling snarl, and the most depressing thing about the film is that its mediocrity may be intentional.—*D.D.* (4/9/01) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Kips Bay Theatre.)

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE

The latest film from the talented young Hong Kong writer-director Wong Kar Wai makes us pant for adultery. In the early sixties, in a community of Shanghai refugees living in Hong Kong, Mrs. Chan (Maggie Cheung) and Mr. Chow (Tony Leung) are next-door neighbors in a friendly apartment building. The perfectly dressed and coiffed couple meet, talk, and realize that their frequently travelling spouses are off having an affair with each other. What to do? The movie is all about sensual anticipation. Nat King Cole croons on the soundtrack, and the camera caresses the rain on the streets and the texture of a stone wall in the semi-darkness. So skillfully does the director bring us to a state of breathless expectation that when he refuses to deliver the goods he almost seems to have invented a new form of perversion. In Cantonese and French.—*D.D.* (2/5/01) (Village East Cinemas.)



Opening May 4, "Eureka," directed by Shinji Aoyama.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

JOSIE AND THE PUSSYCATS

A teen movie that's something of a put-on. A milquetoast record promoter (Alan Cumming) and his bitchy boss (Parker Posey) implant messages in pop songs which tell young America which clothes to buy and stars to like (e.g., "Heath Ledger is the new Matt Damon"). Into their clutches stumble Josie and the Pussycats, of Archie Comics fame, and, thanks to subliminal suggestion, the band's songs soon top the charts. Throughout all the major-chord fun, the writing and directing team of Harry Elfont and Deborah Kaplan continually wink at the audience. Corporate logos (Starbucks, Target, Revlon) are pasted everywhere; a rebellious record-store employee gets kidnapped by an MTV van; the Manhattan skyline is accessorized with supersized McDonald's arches. These games are fine and frequently hilarious, but they spring from a one-note cleverness; what could have been a lark becomes another hollow display of irony.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, State, and Union Square.)

MC CABE & MRS. MILLER

A beautiful pipe dream of a movie: Robert Altman's fleeting vision of what frontier life might have been, with Warren Beatty as a cocky small-time gambler and Julie Christie as an ambitious madam in the turn-of-the-century Northwest. Delicate, richly textured, and unusually understated, this 1971 picture is not like any other film. Altman builds a Western town as one might build a castle in the air. His stock company of actors turn up quietly in the new location, as if they were part of a floating crap game, and he creates an atmosphere of living interrelationships.—*P.K.* (Cinema Classics; May 4-6.)

MEMENTO

Guy Pearce ("L.A. Confidential") plays Leonard, a former insurance investigator who has mislaid his short-term memory; leave the room and come back ten minutes later, and he won't remember you. To help his case, and to solve the apparent murder of his wife, Leonard tattoos himself with memoranda and drives around the lowlier districts of L.A. County. At the same time, he has a couple of acquaintances (Carrie-Anne Moss and Joe Pantoliano) who seem eager both to support Leonard and to use his condition for their own unscrupulous ends. There is a fine, despairing comedy to these events—not just in our fidgety hero, but in the constant thwarting of our need to know. The young British writer and director Christopher Nolan, who has every intention of putting us through the mill, doubles his fun by running the whole story backward. Damn him.—*A.L.* (3/19/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, and Olympia I and II.)

OPEN DOORS

The Italian actor Gian Maria Volonté does an impressive left-wing star turn as a judge in this 1990 dramatization of the 1937 trial of "the Monster of Palermo," an accountant who bayonetted two colleagues and then raped and shot his own wife. Although the crime carries a penalty of execution under Fascist law, Volonté's liberal judge opposes the death penalty on humanitarian and political grounds because it represents a show of state force. The killer, a Fascist, welcomes it. For too much of the time, the movie is less about capital punishment than about what a great guy the judge is. Volonté's gift is to externalize intellectual processes without seeming stiff or studied, but for this usually expansive actor the role proves a tight fit. Gianni Amelio directed. In Italian.—*Michael Sragow* (Symphony Space; May 8.)

OSSESSIONE

In his 1942 début film, Luchino Visconti takes James M. Cain's novel "The Postman Always Rings Twice," a story of adultery (between a drifter and a roadhouse owner's wife) and murder (of the husband, naturally), drops it into the Po Delta, and suffuses it with a melancholy visual poetry. From the start, Visconti was a master of sexy, languorous gestures (and equally sultry camera movements). And in Massimo Girotti and Clara Calamai he had the actors to give those gestures life. The picture is overlong and erratic, but its sweaty, sooty beauty makes it a must for movie lovers.—*M.S.* (Guggenheim Museum; May 4-5.)

POLLOCK

A dogged march through the life and work of Jackson Pollock, starting in the early nineteen-forties, when Lee Krasner (Marcia Gay Harden) first approached him in Greenwich Village, continuing through their marriage and other tempests, and ending gloomily in a car wreck in 1956. The film was directed by Ed Harris, who also plays the artist. His face doesn't much resemble that of Pollock, but Harris has mastered the hunched amble and the glaring gaze. His best scenes are not the boozy rants but the quiet times with a cigarette and a brush—or, latterly, a dripping stick. Pollock's drinking was an interruption of his art, not a spur to it, and the film can do little to connect the two; we are left with a sombre study of discontent.—*A.L.* (3/5/01) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE TAILOR OF PANAMA

A messy adaptation of the John le Carré novel, directed by John Boorman. As Andy Osnard, Pierce Brosnan plays an anti-Bond: the spy who loves nobody except himself. He is sent to Panama, where he recruits a local tailor, Harry Pendel (Geoffrey Rush)—who, like so many le Carré creations, has constructed the story of himself to escape from a shameful, secret past. On the evidence of Harry's tips, Osnard urges London and Washington to back a democratic coup to the tune of several million dollars. Almost no one in this picture is free of corruption, moral, sexual, or financial; the only virtuous character, Harry's wife, Louisa (Jamie Lee Curtis), is barely allowed room to breathe. Boorman wants to turn the novel's rueful satire into something sharp and sweaty, but the tone veers all over the place, and the plot feels like reckless fantasy.—*A.L.* (4/2/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

WITH A FRIEND LIKE HARRY. . .

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

ALONG CAME A SPIDER

Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk,
Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro
Cinema 1 and 2, New York Twin, 19th
Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village
Theatre VII.

CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON

(12/11/00)

Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas,
Empire 25, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay
Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Park & 86th
Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, and Village
East Cinemas.

DRIVEN
Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.
KINGDOM COME
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Union Square.
THE LUZHIN DEFENCE
Beekman, Empire 25, and Union Square.
ONE NIGHT AT MC COOL'S
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.
PIE IN THE SKY: THE BRIGID BERLIN STORY
Film Forum.
SPY KIDS
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.
TOWN AND COUNTRY
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village East Cinemas.
YI YI (1/8/01)
Cinema Village.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

Charlotte Rampling in François Ozon's "Under the Sand."

N. ASCENCIOS

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"The Responsive Eye: A Brian De Palma Retrospective." May 5 at 1: "Greetings" (†) and "Wotan's Wake" (1962). ♦ May 5 at 3:15: "Blow Out" (†). ♦ May 6 at 2: "Casualties of War" (1989). ♦ May 6 at 4:30: "The Untouchables" (1987).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—May 2 at 7:15 and May 3 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Jeanne and the Perfect Guy" (Oliver Ducastel and Jacques Martineau; in French). ♦ May 2 at 9:10: "Trait d'Union," four short films based on the choreography of Angelin Prejlocaj. ♦ May 4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "A Summer's Tale" (1996, Eric Rohmer; in French). ♦ May 5 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "My Night at Maud's" (1969, Rohmer; in French). ♦ May 6 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "La Collectionneuse" (1967, Rohmer; in French). ♦ May 7 at 6:50 and 9:10: "Violent Summer" (1959, Valerio Zurlini; in French). ♦ May 8 at 6:50 and 9:10: "Family Diary" (1962, Zurlini; in French and Italian).
CINEMA CLASSICS
332 E. 11th St. (971-1015)—May 2-3 at 7:50 and 10: "Thieves Like Us" (1974, Robert Altman). ♦ May 4 at 8 and 10:10 and May 5-6 at 5:50, 8, and 10:10: "McCabe & Mrs. Miller" (†). ♦ May 7-8 at 8 and 10: "Brewster McCloud" (1970, Altman).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—May 2-3 at 1, 3:45, 7, and 9:35: "Once Upon a Time in China" (1991, Tsui Hark; in Cantonese). ♦ May 4-8 at 1, 3:45, 7, and 9:35: "Once Upon A Time in China II" (1992, Tsui; in Cantonese).
GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (360-4321)—"Conversations Between Shadows and Light: Italian Cinematography." All films are in Italian. May 2 at 7 and May 5 at 7: "Nights of Cabiria" (1956, Federico Fellini). ♦ May 4 at 7 and May 5 at 3: "Ossessione" (†).
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Second Act: Fourth Season," rarely shown Italian movies. All films are in Italian. May 3 at 2:30 and May 4 at 6: "Facts of Murder" (1959, Pietro Germi). ♦ May 3 at 5 and May 5 at 2: "Mafioso" (1962, Alberto Lattuada). ♦ May 4 at 2:30: "Adua e le Compagne" (1960, Antonio Pietrangeli). ♦ May 4 at 8:15 and May 6 at 2: "Il Posto" (1961, Ermanno Olmi). ♦ May 5 at 5: "Allegro Non Troppo" (1976, Bruno Bozzetto). ♦ May 6 at 5 and May 7 at 2:30: "Chains" (1949, Raffaello Matarazzo). ♦ May 7 at 6 and May 8 at 2:30: "Two Cents Worth of Hope" (1952, Renato Castellani).
MUSEUM OF TELEVISION & RADIO
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through May 20: "The 2001 Television Documentary Film Festival." May 3 at 6:30: "Hitmakers: The Teens Who Stole Pop Music" (2001, Morgan Neville). ♦ May 4 at 6:30: "Broken Silence: Hell on Earth, Eyes of the Holocaust" (2001, Vojtech Jasny). ♦ May 5 at 4: A tribute to Maysles Films, featuring "Meet Marlon Brando" (1965), "With Love from Truman" (1966), and "Muhammad and Larry" (1980). ♦ May 6 at 2: Documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles will appear at screenings of "What's Happening!: The Beatles in the U.S.A." (1964) and "Orson Welles—Spain" (1966). ♦ May 8 at 7: "American Gypsy: A Stranger in Everybody's Land" (2000, Jasmine Dellal).
SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—"Cinema Italian Style." All films are in Italian. May 8 at 7: "Open Doors" (†). ♦ May 8 at 9: "Palombella Rossa" (1989, Nanni Moretti).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through May 17: "Recent Argentine Cinema." ♦ Movies for kids. May 5-6 at 2: "Anne of Green Gables" (1934, George Nicholls, Jr.).

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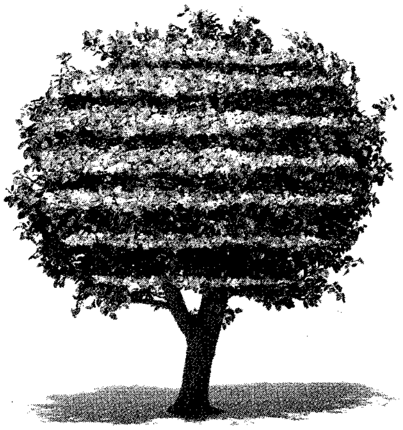

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
A MILITARY SECRET

Bob Kerrey of Nebraska and John Kerry of Massachusetts have so much in common that for years people confused them. The similarities go far beyond homonymy. Kerrey and Kerry, the Romulus and Remus of the American Senate, were youthful, vigorous, good-looking, and moderate-to-liberal, with occasional maverick tendencies. Both born in 1943, they both entered the Navy in 1966 and, as junior officers, led men into combat along the treacherously canopied riverbanks of the Mekong Delta. And both of them, when they returned, spoke and organized against the war in which they had fought. What propelled them to political success was the moral symmetry of their valor: they were war heroes, and they were antiwar heroes. Both went to Vietnam, both came back with wounds and medals, and both turned against the war. So they could be safely and deservedly admired by nearly everyone: by the elders who believed that the requirement of duty was to obey and to serve, no matter how perplexing the country's cause; by the young who thought the war so wrong that the only moral course was resistance and rebellion; and by the many others who felt conflicted, uneasy with the war's futility and brutality, and uneasy, too, with the Oedipal rage of the New Left. Still, to some, Kerrey of Nebraska was a more appealing figure than Kerry of Massachusetts. The latter was the more theatrical (and the more effective, and the more calculating) in his protest: when, as the founder of the antiwar Vietnam Veterans of America, he testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April of 1971, the chairman, Claiborne Pell, expressed the hope that he would one day return as "a colleague of ours in this body." Kerry seemed always mindful of his (to use a phrase from a letter written by a troubled Rhodes Scholar at about that time) political viability. Kerrey of Nebraska lost most of his right leg below the knee; his psychic wounds seemed deeper, too. His dissent took more modest forms—he marched, did a little speaking, and, inspired by Allard Lowenstein, threw himself into registering young voters—and he took his time about going into politics. He always seemed the freer, the odder, the angrier, the funnier, the more interestingly complicated of the two.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

This week, the *Times Magazine* and "60 Minutes II" have come out with a story about Bob Kerrey that awakens a thousand memories and revives as many questions. Kerrey is now fifty-seven and the president of the New School University, in Manhattan; he left the Senate last January. In the *Times* story, written by Gregory L. Vistica, Kerrey, a twenty-five-year-old team leader in the SEALS, the Navy's élite commando force, had been in Vietnam for scarcely a month when, on the night of February 25, 1969, during a raid on a hamlet called Thanh Phong, he and his six-man team shot and killed at least thirteen defenseless women and children. What Vistica describes is a terrifying example of the fog of war. Kerrey says that he and his men killed the people from a distance and only later discovered that they were women and children, and unarmed. However, one of his comrades, Gerhard Klann—a now retired petty officer who was the most experienced member of Kerrey's squad—insists that the civilians were rounded up and killed at close range, and that it was Kerrey who gave the order to kill them.

Two months later, during another harrowing night mission, Kerrey, after sustaining the mutilating wound that sent him home for good, stayed with his men under fire to supervise their evacuation. For his heroism that night, which has never been questioned, he received the Medal of Honor, the most exalted of all military decorations. He had already won a medal, the Bronze Star, for what happened at Thanh Phong. It came with a citation, which reads as follows:

> For heroic achievement while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in armed conflict against the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong communist aggressors in the Republic of Vietnam on the 25th of February 1969. Lieutenant (junior grade) KERRY served as Officer in Charge of United States Navy SEAL Team ONE, Delta Platoon. While leading his men on patrol in the Than Phu Secret Zone, he encountered armed Viet Cong on two separate occasions. When fire was encountered, Lieutenant (junior grade) KERRY dispersed his men and returned the fire killing fourteen Viet Cong. Then, as he and his men were returning to a canal for extraction, enemy movement was detected. The ensuing fire fight ended with seven more aggressors killed. The net result of his patrol was twenty-one Viet Cong killed, two hootches destroyed, and two enemy weapons captured. Lieutenant (junior grade) KERRY's outstanding professionalism, leadership, courage under fire and regard for the safety of his men were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

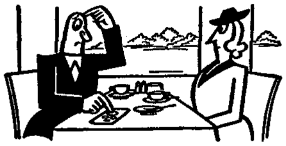
There is no conclusive evidence favoring either Kerrey's or Gerhard Klann's version of what happened that night, and none is likely to be found. But there is no denying the horror of it—the awful deaths of the Vietnamese and the nightmare that has haunted Kerrey, Klann, and their comrades for three decades. There is also no denying that the version set forth in the citation is full of lies. In this respect it is like many of the official documents, military and civilian, of the Vietnam War. The untruths in it go well beyond the misspelling of Kerrey's name to match that of his brother officer and future senatorial colleague from Massachusetts. There were no "aggressors" among the Vietnamese dead that night; there were not even any men of military age. (Perhaps that is why only two "enemy weapons," if that many, were "captured.")

Sometimes an incident lends itself easily to comprehension and conclusion, condemnation or approbation, but the Kerrey affair seems only to deepen the difficulty of making moral judgments when memories are conflicting and traumatized, and when their context is itself freighted with moral ambiguity. In this generation of American politics, how a man reacted to the war in Vietnam—what service he did or avoided, how he interpreted his responsibilities, whether he was serious about the relation between his own choices and his country's—has inevitably been a central question. How we, as voters, have reacted to the Vietnam records or non-records of men as various as Al Gore, Dan Quayle, George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and Bill Clinton has said as much about the condition of our own moral attentiveness as about theirs. What seemed clear for many years is that in nearly everyone's hierarchy of distinctions Bob Kerrey was unimpeachable, not merely because of the wounds he suffered and the courage he displayed but also for the ironic and even tragic cast to his character. He had the bona fides to be one of the Senate's truthtellers. He had the moral stature to call a President to account, and the moral subtlety to do it without self-righteous rancor. ("He's an unusually good liar," Kerrey said of Clinton, with enough bemusement to imply that the difference between Clinton and the standard-issue sort of sinner was a matter not so much of depravity as of skill.)

Now it turns out that Kerrey kept a secret so terrible that, if he had disclosed it, he might never have become a governor or a senator or a university president. But the guilt and shame of which he has spoken in recent days is not his alone. The citation's twenty-one Vietcong were a bureaucratic fiction that Kerrey never, until now, corrected. But, as he and many of his fellow-veterans have noted, Thanh Phong was in a "free-fire" zone, the "Secret Zone" of the citation—that is, an area where civilians had been warned to leave their homes and regather in "strategic hamlets," and where anyone who remained was regarded as allied with the enemy, and where the difference between guerrillas and civilians, never sharp, was further blurred by darkness and fear. The real lie, the big lie, was that it was possible for a democracy to keep its soul while fighting a war in which the only hope of victory lay in systematically denuding the land of all human life. Kerrey's shame, like his valor, is his country's.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

LOS ANGELES POSTCARD
TOM JOAD DOES LUNCH



The other day, Peter Benedek, a founding partner of the United Talent Agency, in Los Angeles, walked into the Grill, a Beverly Hills restaurant popular with agents and producers, and noticed something peculiar. "The place was dead," he said. "And it dawned on me: the Grill-O-Meter is down."

On April 10th (a day when the S. & P. 500 finished up 30.79 points), the Grill-O-Meter suffered a nasty correction. According to Michael Goddard, the restaurant's manager (who bears more than a passing resemblance to his father, Mark, who played Don West on "Lost in Space"), the Grill often serves as many as two hundred and ten lunches a day. But on April 10th, he said, "we did a hundred and thirty-five lunches. We had maybe two agents in the whole restaurant. It's the expense-account thing. These guys aren't used to having to pay for their own lunch."

The downturn in the 90210 economy has nothing to do with the Dow or Nasdaq. It's the result of a jittery round of cost-cutting that's been going on in anticipation of a labor action threatened by both the Writers Guild of America and the Screen Actors Guild. If the writers decide to strike when their contract expires, on May 1st (and the actors follow suit, on June 30th), this could be a summer in which no sitcoms, studio movies, or deals will be made.

On April 15th, International Creative Management froze its expense accounts, so agents there are no longer being reimbursed for the meals they use to ingratiate themselves with buyers of their clients' services. (Exceptions are made if a big deal is in the works or if an agent needs to travel with a major client to a film festival or a première.) On the first of the year, the Endeavor agency capped expense accounts at five hundred dollars per month. And over at the William Morris Agency members of the motion-picture department are now asked to clear their business lunches with their department heads in advance. "We gave a little speech a few weeks ago, the gist of which was: Don't be feeding the town," a William Morris executive said. "Instead of 'Wanna have lunch?' we're suggesting people try, 'Why not drop by the office for a cup of coffee?' "

At I.C.M., some say that even the in-house refreshments have been scaled back. "They've switched the Evian to Crystal Geyser," one agent complained. (An I.C.M. spokesman denied that the water policy had changed.)

At U.T.A., expense accounts have largely been left alone, but on January 1st board members, partners, and senior agents unanimously agreed to put twenty per cent of their salaries into an escrow account that will be used as a war chest to avoid personnel cuts in the event of a strike. "Sure, I'd be sad if I never got the twenty per cent back," one U.T.A. agent said. "But if it means that everyone is going to stay on board and come out on the other side of this thing—well, I can't compare it to Sir Ernest Shackleton in Antarctica, but it has been a morale builder."

Executives aren't the only victims. Several of the major agencies have thinned their mailrooms and eliminated overtime pay for assistants, which means that a typical mogul-in-training is now taking home about five hundred dollars a week instead of seven hundred and fifty. That's tough, especially since these assistants are the ones who are in the awkward position of having to ask their bosses' prospective lunch partners if they wouldn't mind picking up the tab.

In a city in which business and friendship are intertwined, the cutbacks have provoked a wave of social downsizing as well. One Endeavor agent said, "You take a hard look at your calendar and decide who's expendable."

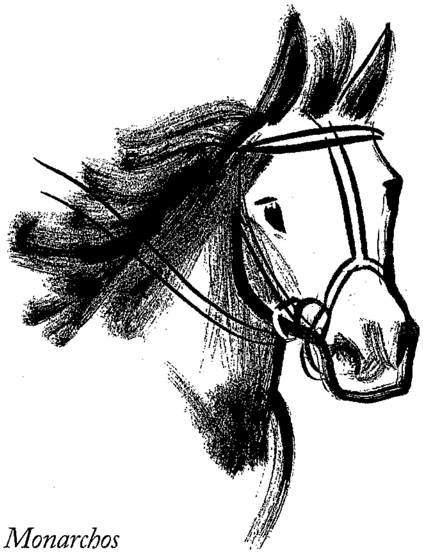
—*John Brodie*

DERBY DAY
THE PEOPLE'S COLT

RACING FORM

Jim Squires thought he was used to the limelight. Nothing, he felt, would ever beat the first couple of weeks he spent as the media liaison for the Ross Perot campaign, in 1992. For sheer frenzy, there was the McGovern campaign of 1972 and Watergate—both of which he covered for the Chicago *Tribune* before becoming its editor, in 1981. During his eight years at the helm of the *Trib*, the newspaper won seven Pulitzer Prizes. Squires has known hoopla; he has known hype.

But politics, he has found, is nothing compared with the world of horse racing, particularly in the weeks just before the Kentucky Derby. Since 1992, Squires, whose ranch-hand demeanor belies his long residency in Chicago, has been a breeder of Thoroughbreds. Last March, a colt he bred, named Monarchos, won the Florida Derby, his third straight win, by going wide around the field in a move that was variously termed "electrifying," "dynamic," and "majestic." Monarchos trounced them all, including favorites with far more experience. Although it was the horse's first stakes race, he showed no lack of self-esteem, which didn't surprise Squires. When he was born three years ago, Monarchos got to his feet with one jump, eyes alert, ears pricked, ten minutes old. Squires was sorry to sell the colt in 1999, but he is in the business of breeding yearlings for sale as racing prospects.


Monarchos

Since there is no story in racing like that of a working-class hero heading for and possibly winning the Kentucky Derby, Monarchos's Florida performance was a sentimental explosion—an inexpensive mare (Squires paid in the lowest five figures for her) bred to an inexpensive first-year stallion (medium four figures in a business where the best stallions command stud fees of hundreds of thousands of dollars). Not only were the newspapers and magazines calling him but so were breeders and bloodstock agents. The newspapers wanted to hear the story; the breeders wanted to buy Monarchos's mother. The mare's value rose by ten, twenty, fifty times her purchase price. They wanted to breed her to one of those two- or three-hundred-thousand-dollar stallions, in the belief, perhaps, that if you could breed her to a cheap stallion and produce a Kentucky Derby horse, you could breed her to an expensive stallion and the resulting foal would sprout wings and fly.

Squires has a strong rooting interest in Monarchos, made all the more intense by the fact that he is the one who stays with his laboring mares all night and pulls out the foals. But he has no say in who trains or rides Monarchos. The colt's trainers, John and Donna Ward, and his owners, John and Debby Oxley, had two other Derby prospects when the year began, both with greater experience than Monarchos, so the chances were slim that he would be the one to get there. To make matters worse, other trainers engaged in trash talk. Trash talk among Thoroughbred horse trainers would not necessarily be recognized as trash talk by, say, basketball players, but, nevertheless, when a New York trainer said that Monarchos "had better step it up" at the Wood Memorial, Squires was annoyed. The New York press didn't like the colt's chances, either. But at the Wood Memorial, on April 14th, he placed a solid second, turning in a controlled performance that bodes well for the Derby this Saturday.

As the race gets closer, Squires has begun to relax a little. For one thing, he has good seats. (When he and his wife, Mary Anne, went to their first Kentucky Derby, in 1989, the crowd was so thick that they never saw a horse.) Monarchos has demonstrated his ability and earned a spot in the race. Now, like every Derby prospect, he is waiting on time and luck, on the many things that can go wrong and the many things that can go right. As always, the horse business specializes in prodigious ups and downs. Maybe that's why people look at an exciting election and call it "a real horse race," rather than looking at an exciting horse race and calling it "a real election."

—*Jane Smiley*

ON THE AIR
THE JETS, THE METS, THE JEWS

On WFAN, the sports-talk radio station, sports fans have an opportunity to offer their opinions on a wide range of subjects. That range got a little wider, on the Saturday before last, after news got out that Charlie Ward, a player for the New York Knicks, had made some controversial comments about Jews to the *Times:* "Jews are stubborn," "They had [Christ's] blood on their hands," "There are Christians getting persecuted by Jews every day." It also happened to be the first day of the N.F.L. entry draft. For the station's callers and the excitable host, Chris Russo, who is known as the Mad Dog, there was much to talk about.

Russo: Let's get Pete on the car phone. Pete, you're on the FAN—take it away.

Pete: I wanna speak about the Jets' picks. But, real quick, what I think is funny about these comments that [Ward] made: everyone gets all fired up. You know what? If you're a practicing Jew, part of being that is believing that the Christians don't have it right. And if you're a practicing Christian, if you really believe it, you believe the other guys are wrong, so how come, when people say the things they know they think, everyone gets all fired up? I think it's silly.

Russo: You know, Pete, you make an excellent point! That is the separation of the two religions. Some religions, some of the time, coexist peacefully, and you're right—that is their belief. But, still, Charlie Ward shouldn't say it. It's stupid.

Pete: Coexisting peacefully is one thing, but if you're a man about it, and you choose a religion, whatever it might be, part of that is saying, 'Well, you know what? I think the other guys have got it wrong, maybe, and that's why I'm picking this one.' But, nevertheless, I would like to see the Jets take Moss. I hear this talk about his size. I think our problem last year was not the fact that, other than Chrebet, we had small receivers. Our problem was, other than Chrebet, we had not-so-good receivers. Give me a great small one, and I'll take him. We need someone else who's good, with Chrebet, not necessarily someone who's tall.

Russo: Excellent point. Let's get away from the height. Pete, thank you for the call. You make a good point, too, about the religious issue. You can make an argument that that is the difference between two religions. You don't like Charlie Ward making it public. And you don't want to think that maybe this is a situation where he holds things against Jewish people because he's thinking about what they did two thousand years ago. But, if you're a practicing Jew and you're a serious Jewish person, you believe one thing and Christians believe something else—me, I hate to get involved in it. Religion, politics, you're wasting your time. One ear, and out the other. When you hear an athlete, a musician, or a politician talk, don't pay attention. Please.

It's twelve-ten, Sports Radio Sixty-six. Back after this.

[Commercial break]

Russo: Here's Joe on the car phone. Joe, howya doin'?

Joe: How's it goin', man?

Russo: Fine, Joe, what's happenin'?

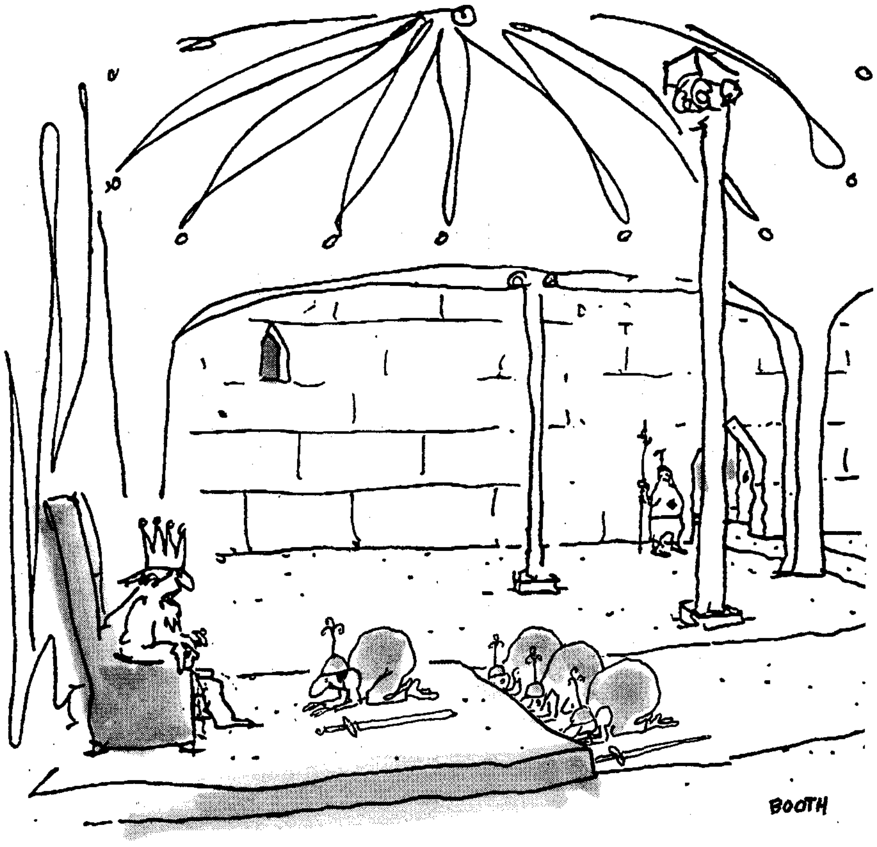
Joe: Chris, howya doin'? Yeah. Just real quick on the Charlie Ward thing. It was a couple years back where it seemed that after every game, after every win, there was a reference to God being on their side, and I mean, it's just ridiculous to think that God is on one team's side in a stupid basketball game. That was No. 1. To move away from that, though—

Russo: I agree with you. You never hear a player thank God when he strikes out with the bases loaded, I'll tell you that.

Joe: You know? Exactly, and the other thing is, and like I said, it's so ridiculous. I mean, if you wanna go with recovering from a serious ailment or something like that and God is on your side, I'm all for it. But a basketball game? Please. I mean, enough already. Anyhow, to go over to the Mets, though, and I'm not panicking early, but I said this back in the off season: Kevin Appier and Steve Trachsel are not Mike Hampton.

Russo: Excellent point, Joe.

—*Nick Paumgarten*



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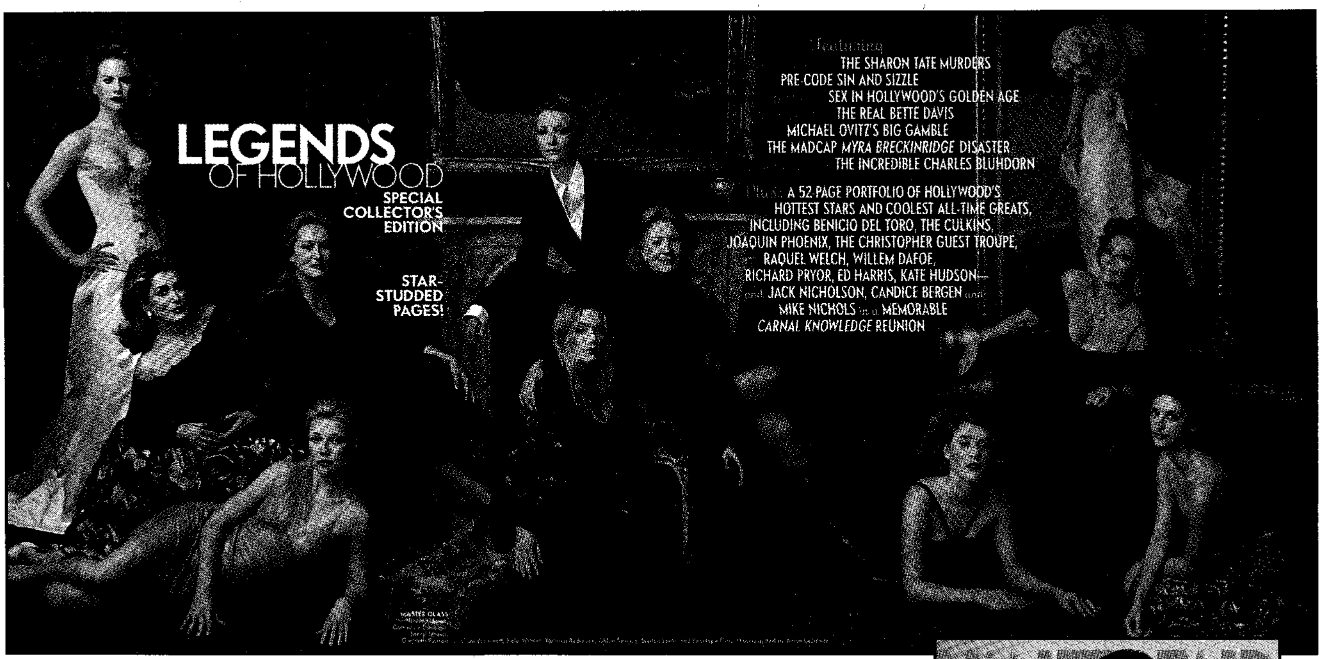
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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

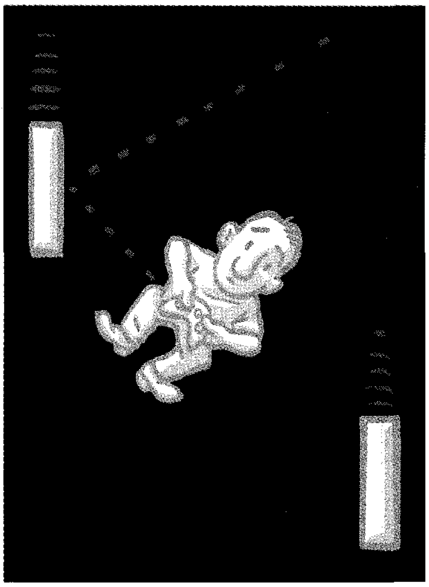
At a time when most technology companies around the globe are hunkering down, slashing budgets and laying off staff, a few of them are spending more furiously than ever. These are the video-game giants—Sony, Nintendo, and now Microsoft—who are facing the most important year in their industry's history. Each of them is betting billions of dollars on a new, high-powered game system (or "platform"). Sony's PlayStation 2 débuted in the United States last October and has already sold three million copies. Microsoft's Xbox and Nintendo's GameCube are due out in the fall. This isn't just kid stuff—the potential payoff is immense. Americans will spend as much money on video games this year as they will at the box office. There's a PlayStation in one out of three American homes; two years ago, the original PlayStation accounted for forty per cent of Sony's annual profits.

All three platforms are pretty nifty, so it's hard to gauge which of them will be ruling the game universe a year from now. But there is one thing we can predict: the biggest winner will not be Sony or Microsoft or Nintendo. Instead, it will be Electronic Arts, or E.A., a Silicon Valley company that, over the past five years, has turned itself into the arms merchant of the game wars. As long as the battle rages on, E.A. will be guaranteed a thriving market for its wares, which helps explain why, despite the market's swoon, its stock is up forty per cent this year.

E.A. has earned that position by taking advantage of one abiding fact about computers: we buy them not for their speedy processors and high-powered graphics but for the cool things they allow us to do. The Apple II, for instance, didn't take off until a small company designed a spreadsheet program for it called VisiCalc. The P.C. attracted users because of WordPerfect and Lotus 1-2-3. And video-game systems, however jazzy they may be, are nothing without great games. Without "Super Mario Bros." and "The Legend of Zelda," Nintendo would have gone nowhere.

E.A. recognized early that, if people buy a system for the games, the smart thing to do is just to sell them the games. It has capitalized on the key economic realities of the Information Age: first, that it's better to make software than hardware; and, second, that it's better to make software for several different platforms than for just one.

Once you've developed, say, "Madden NFL 2001," which is E.A.'s signature sports game, it costs little to churn out additional copies. It's basically a CD-ROM in a plastic box, selling at fifty bucks a pop. By contrast, every time Sony builds a new PlayStation 2 it has to shell out for expensive components—computer chips, graphics cards, memory. These costs never go away. In fact, Sony loses money on every PlayStation 2 it makes. This may be worth it, since Sony also makes its own games and collects royalties from companies like E.A. But building and selling machines demands a much larger, and riskier, investment than laying down some lines of code on a compact disk.



E.A.'s focus on software has given it special leverage. Its biggest titles—"Madden NFL," "FIFA Soccer," "NBA LIVE"—are now so popular that many game-players won't buy a console if it doesn't run those games. In 1999, for instance, the video-game maker Sega launched its Dreamcast system, a year ahead of the PlayStation 2. Dreamcast was technologically impressive, but E.A. decided that tailoring games to it was too expensive and thus too risky. Two months ago, Sega announced that it was shutting down Dreamcast. E.A. had become a kingmaker.

Nonetheless, E.A. would rather have three kings than one. It has reaped tremendous benefits from being what is called "platform-agnostic." Sony makes games only for the PlayStation. Nintendo will make them only for the GameCube, and Microsoft will presumably make them just for the Xbox. There's a logic to this: to get you to buy the GameCube, Nintendo needs to insure that there are games you can play only on the GameCube. As a result, though, the market for its games—the real profit center—is limited. E.A., on the other hand, will eventually make games for all three platforms. It doesn't matter what system you buy: if you want to play "Madden 2002," E.A. will be happy to sell it to you. E.A. reaches as many customers as possible while keeping Sony or Nintendo from monopolizing the market.

In all this, E.A. is adhering to the principle that closed systems stagnate and open systems flourish. Sony's music division would never think of selling Bob Dylan and Jennifer Lopez CDs that could be played only on a Sony Discman. But that is essentially what the game giants are doing. Or consider Apple and Microsoft in the nineteen-eighties. Apple made software for its own computers but not for anyone else; Microsoft made software for almost everyone, including Apple. You know the story: Apple became a niche company, and Microsoft conquered the world.

In some respects, the video-game business is a lot like the razor business, which follows a simple model: Give away the razor, gouge 'em on the price of the blades. Sony will sell you a PlayStation 2 at a loss, in the hope that it will make a steep profit on the games. But, whereas Gillette rakes it in by being the only company to make blades that fit its Mach 3 razor, Sony doesn't have that luxury. Gamers, unlike shavers, need variety, and Sony, on its own, could never satisfy them. That's where E.A. comes in. It gets to sell the blades without having to make the razors. To paraphrase the Pixies, it can simply gouge away.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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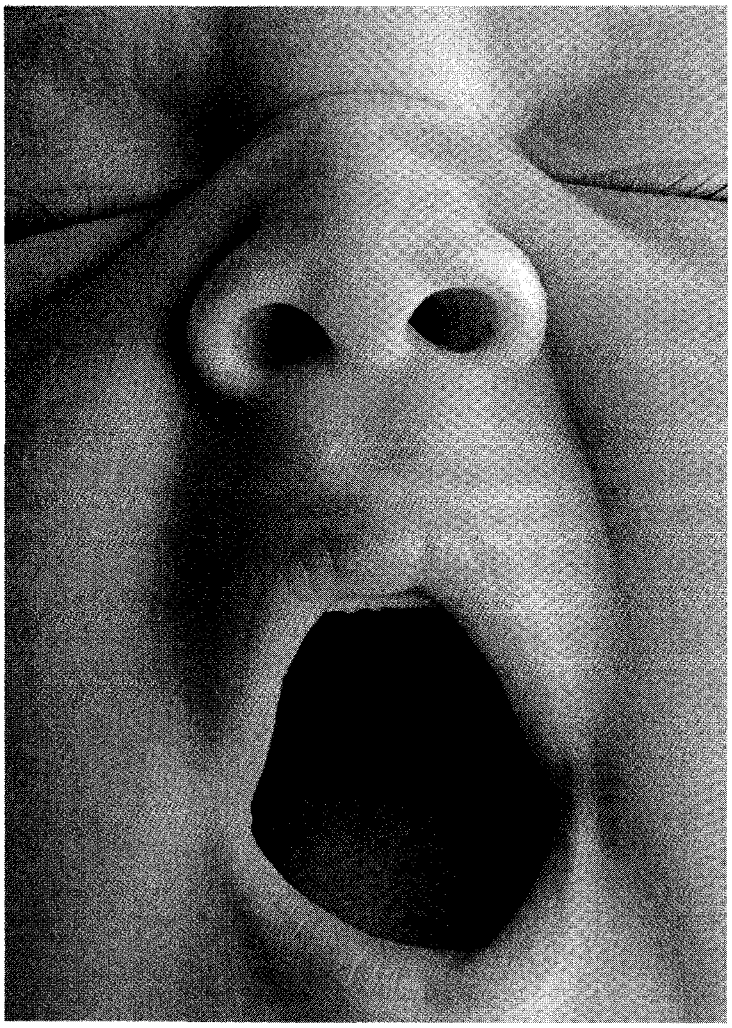

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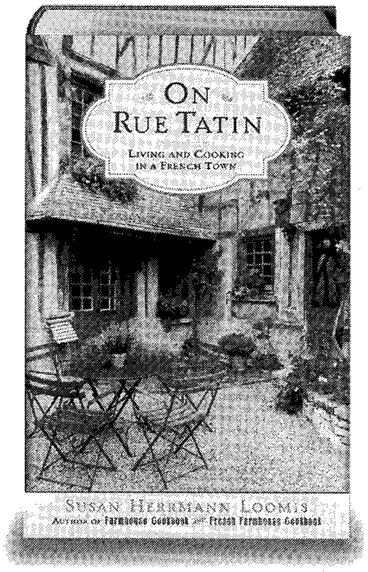
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LETTER FROM BEIJING

GREAT SPRINT FORWARD

All China is enlisted in the bid for the 2008 Olympics.

BY PETER HESSLER

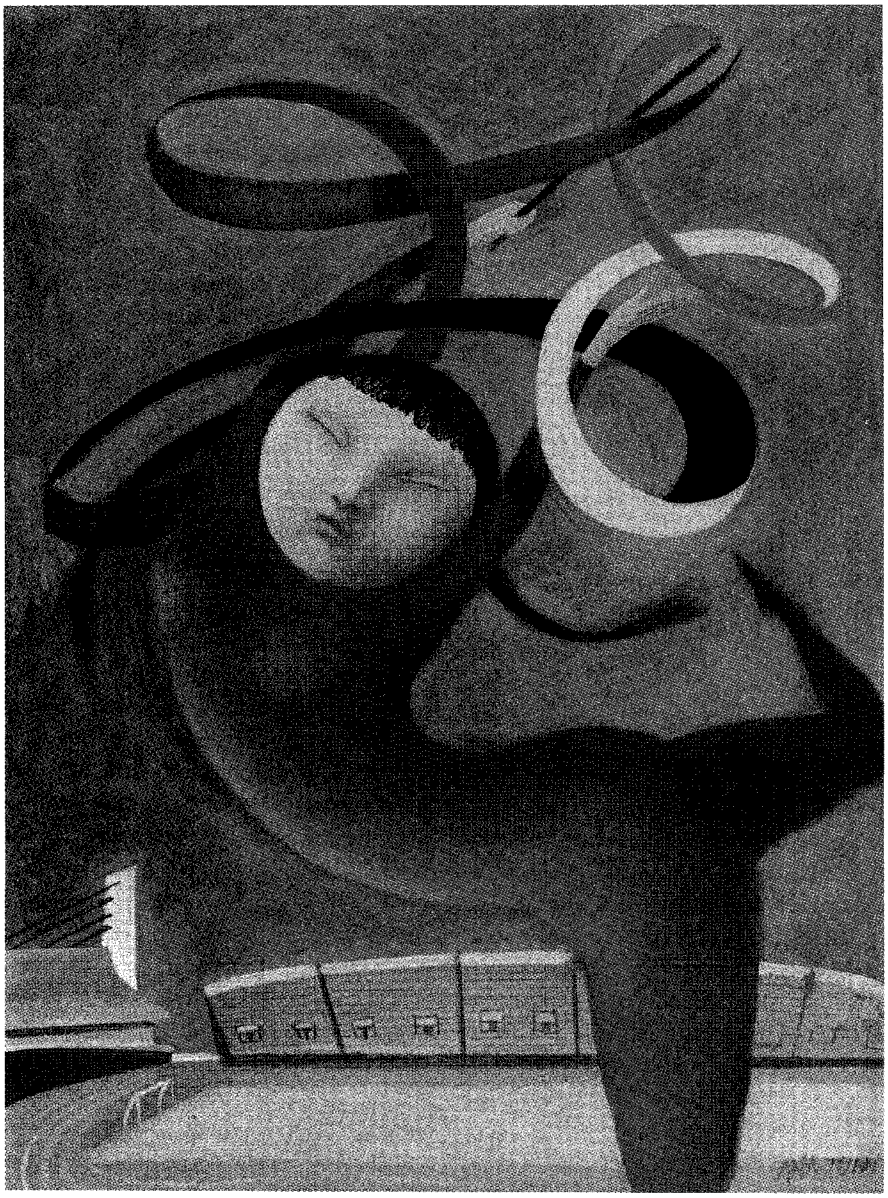
The cabbie smiled and said "Good morning" when I got into his car. It was 3:30 P.M. He had tiny eyes and yellow teeth. Whenever he spoke English, it became a physical language: he leaned forward and gripped the wheel, pursing his lips, while his voice rose in pitch. He also knew how to say "Hello" and "O.K." He said "Good morning" twice, and then he switched to Chinese. We were heading north, looking for the Olympics.

This week in late February had been a good one for foreigners to take cabs in Beijing. Every day, there were special announcements on the cabbies' shortwaves, reminding them to be polite to foreign guests because the International Olympic Committee's inspection commission was in town for a four-day tour to evaluate Beijing's bid to host the Summer Games in 2008. Cabbies had also been given a two-cassette taped English course that taught them phrases that would promote the bid, including "The sun is shining," "The city will be more beautiful when it hosts the Olympic Games," and "Lacquerware was introduced to Japan from China during the Tang dynasty." Every Beijing cabbie knew about Meng Jingshan, a driver who, last year, had spoken about China's Olympic bid to a reporter from the Atlanta *Journal & Constitution*. The subsequent article was only three hundred and thirty-five words long, but it had somehow caught the eye of the Chinese authorities, probably because it quoted Meng as having said, "The Olympics is not the venue for talking about human rights." For Meng's excellent diplomacy, the government had designated him one of the capital's "Hundred Best Taxi-Drivers"; he was awarded a bonus of a few hundred dollars; and the Beijing newspapers had portrayed him as an exemplary common man.

When I told my driver that I was a reporter who wanted to visit potential sites for the 2008 Olympics, the responsibility of having me in his cab seemed to weigh heavily on him. He promised that we would find the sites along the highway that leads to the Great Wall. I could see him thinking hard when I took out my notebook. "The Olympics can help the Chinese people," he said. "I don't really know how to say it right, but it would improve our status in the world."

We were driving along the Second Ring Road, which was lined with bright-colored banners that had been installed in honor of the visiting inspectors. In Chinese, the banners read "New Beijing, New Olympics"; in English, they proclaimed, "New Beijing, Great Olympics." I was curious as to why that single adjective had been tweaked in translation. A few weeks later, when I interviewed Beijing's vice-mayor, Liu Jingmin, he explained that the Chinese "new" has a broader meaning that doesn't translate well. "We decided to translate it into English as 'great' instead because the Olympics has a classical meaning," he said. "It didn't seem right to say 'new.' " But I talked with another Chinese sports official whose explanation sounded more frank. "If they said 'New Olympics' in English, it would seem as if China wanted to change the Games," he said. "The I.O.C. wouldn't like that. They'd think, Here's this Communist country that's trying to take over the Olympics."

Cabdrivers were in the vanguard of the Olympics campaign, but there were plenty of others involved, too, including tens of thousands of workers, students, and volunteers, who had been mobilized to clean up the city. A friend of mine worked in an office building where the following notice had been distributed: "Since the Olympic Committee's delegation will visit Beijing next week, some buildings around the Third Ring Road have been ordered to stop heating in order to reduce the smoke and dust. Therefore, please wear heavier clothes when you are in your office next week!" There was only so much that could be done about Beijing's air—the city is one of the most polluted capitals in the world—but the government had embarked on an ambitious urban beautification program, which involved a lot of paint: according to official figures, a total surface area of twenty-six million square metres had been covered. Work crews had painted the highway guardrails white; they had dyed the grass in Tiananmen Square green; and they had splashed Old World colors on Brave New World housing projects. Suddenly, the city's proletarian apartment blocks looked as if they were marching through a hot Italian palette: bitter greens, brilliant ochres, smooth pale blues. Near my office, a cluster of old gray buildings on Workers' Stadium Road had emerged in burnt sienna. Down the street, the façade of a six-story apartment building had been doused in sunny Venetian pink. Its other three sides were still gray, but you couldn't see them from the road.



In China, sports have been entangled with politics since the time of the Opium Wars.

ANA JUAN

These civic improvements didn't come cheap: Beijing had already budgeted the equivalent in yuan of twenty million dollars, and the government news agency had reported that if the bid was successful the city would spend an additional twenty billion on pollution control, infrastructure improvements, and new venues for the events. The other cities competing for the 2008 Games are Paris, Osaka, Toronto, and Istanbul, and the I.O.C. will make its decision in Moscow on July 13th. In 1993, when Beijing competed to host the 2000 Summer Games, the city lost to Sydney by only two votes. Some Chinese still speak angrily about this outcome, the way they gripe about the repeated failure of the national men's soccer team to qualify for the World Cup. This year, there is a sense that nothing will get in the way of the bid. At the height of tensions during the spy-plane incident, the Chinese media made a point of keeping the two issues separate, emphasizing that China's desire to host the Olympics was undiminished by its conflict with the United States. Indeed, probably the most impressive aspect of the Beijing bid is the depth of public support for it.

This enthusiasm surprised me, since there is virtually nothing about the the Olympics that is culturally relevant to China. Apart from judo and Tae Kwon Do, whose links to China are indirect, there are no traditional Chinese athletics in the Games. In ancient times, the Chinese nobility played *cuju*, a game that is remotely similar to soccer, and *chuiwan*, which resembles golf. The Forbidden City Museum has a painting of a Tang-dynasty emperor, Minghuang, involved in a polo-like game with the palace maidens. But the heart of the ancient Chinese athletic tradition, and the part of it that was more accessible to common people, consists of *wushu*, or traditional martial arts, and *qigong*, meditative breathing exercises. These activities are as much spiritual and aesthetic as they are physical; their goal is artistic expression and self-improvement, rather than winning. The ancient Chinese didn't build stadiums, because their athletics were not designed to draw paying crowds. The Chinese language didn't even have a term for "sports" until the nineteenth century, when foreigners introduced a more systematic approach to athletics.

Chinese historians draw the line between ancient and modern sports at 1840. That summer, the first full-sized British fleet arrived off Canton, accelerating the Opium War and kicking off China's most painful historical era. The missionaries and other outsiders who arrived in the late nineteenth century introduced Western ideas

"Dickie Wilson attacked my values."

of competition to Chinese athletics. In the early twentieth century, China began to take an interest in the Olympic movement, and a single Chinese sprinter competed in the 1932 Games. Four years later, at the Berlin Olympics, China sponsored a delegation of sixty-nine athletes, among them a mixed-gender *wushu* exhibition team that performed before Hitler. By then, the Chinese were committed to the Olympics, and they had come to see sports as a way in which the country could avenge the injustices of the past century. "There was a feeling of being the underdog and wanting to prove to the world that the Chinese were strong," James Riordan, of the University of Surrey, who has studied sports in the former Soviet Union and China, told me when I called him.

Chinese sports became further entangled in politics after the Communists came to power, in 1949. Mainland China competed in the 1952 Summer Games, but sat out the next Olympics, as the I.O.C. continued to recognize athletes from Taiwan. It wasn't until 1979 that China finally agreed to return to the Olympics—though the country promptly joined the United States-led boycott of the 1980 Games, in Moscow. The Chinese returned to Summer Games competition in 1984, in Los Angeles, where they finished sixth in the over-all medal standings. But the Soviet-bloc boycott that year had weakened the field, and Chinese athletes were outclassed in such marquee events as swimming and track-and-field.

"What they found was that the West had an unfair advantage because they were using all sorts of stimulants," Professor Riordan said. "From the Games in Los Angeles onward, the Chinese were quick to realize that, if you want to win at the Olympics, you have to use drugs."

After the collapse of the Eastern Bloc sports system, European coaches and drug specialists reportedly brought their skills to China. Meanwhile, the country had invested heavily in a system of sports schools, and by the time of the 1988 Seoul Olympics China had spent an estimated two hundred and sixty million dollars to develop a national sports program. That year, the team won only five gold medals, but by the mid-nineties China was turning out some of the best women swimmers and distance runners in the world.

Since ancient times, Chinese women have had a larger role in athletics than their Western counterparts—the figure of the woman hero was a standard one in *wushu* literature. But drugs also had a great deal to do with the sudden rise of Chinese women in endurance and strength sports. In 1994, eleven Chinese athletes tested positive at the Asian Games in Hiroshima; the country experienced one of its most embarrassing moments at the 1998 world championships, when Australian customs officials found vials of human growth hormone in the luggage of a Chinese swimmer. Less than two weeks before last summer's Games, twenty-seven Chinese athletes of both sexes were expelled from the national team—most of them for having tested positive.

Nonetheless, China has shown an extraordinary ability to master certain Western games. The country has been notably successful in women's softball, a sport that was officially introduced to the Olympics at the 1996 Games, in Atlanta. That year, the Chinese women won a silver medal in the event, and they placed fourth in the 2000 Games. Still, in the four years that I have lived in China, I have never seen anyone play softball or heard anyone even mention the sport. The Chinese national team is composed of women who have been trained to play a game and speak a language—innings and outs, balls and strikes—that virtually nobody else in the country understands. Like many of China's Olympic athletes, the softball players are involved in a completely alien activity, and yet they pursue it with remarkable skill. In Atlanta in 1996, China ranked fourth over all among the medal winners. In Sydney last summer, the country ranked third.

At least symbolically, however, China continues to play up its noncompetitive tradition. The banners we passed on the road to the Great Wall featured the Beijing 2008 logo, which consists of five interlocked rings twisted into the shape of a person practicing Tai Chi, a self-improvement exercise that has nothing to do with the Olympics.

During the first hour of our trip, the cabbie stopped to talk with two cops, two other drivers, and half a dozen bystanders, and he used his cell phone to try to call the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee; the number was constantly busy.

Everybody seemed extremely concerned about helping the foreign journalist find the Olympics, but they couldn't give us a specific location for any of the proposed sites north of town. The cabbie told me not to worry; we'd get there fine. But he looked worried as hell, and by the time we got to the Sandy River, twenty miles north of Beijing, there was still no sign of future Olympic activity. We pulled over near a coal refinery, where the driver pissed in the dust while smoking a Derby cigarette. He seemed a little calmer after that. On the way back to the cab, he put his arm on my shoulder.

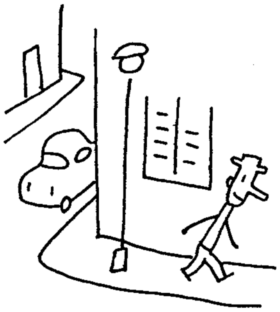
"We're friends, right?" he said.

"Sure," I said.

He introduced himself as Yang Shulin, and said that I could call him Driver Yang. He was fifty-two years old, and he made about four hundred dollars a month. He wore a heavy polyester olive-green military uniform with brass buttons; thirty years ago, during the Cultural Revolution, he had served with the Army in Inner Mongolia. He was a throwback to an older style of cabbie: he wore white cotton driving gloves and old-fashioned cloth shoes, and a Mao Zedong pendant bounced from his rearview mirror. Under the Chairman's photograph were two sentences: "May the Road Be Smooth" and "Protection Against One Hundred Curses."

We hailed a policeman, who told us that the Olympics were back toward town, in the neighborhood of Datun. We turned around and stopped at the intersection of Anli and Huizhong Roads, where two cops were ticketing another cabbie. Driver Yang took a deep breath. "This is a foreign journalist who is writing about the Olympics," he said. "We're trying to find out where they're going to hold the events in 2008."

Everything stopped. One of the cops had been writing the ticket, but now his pen was frozen in the air; the ticketee looked up expectantly. He was a small man in a dirty nylon jacket, who had been nailed for picking up a passenger in a no-stopping zone. All traffic rules were being enforced with particular zeal while the I.O.C. inspectors were in town. The cop smiled at me.



"Please wait a moment," he said politely. He spoke into his walkie-talkie, then turned back to me.

"Which country are you from, please?"

He barked again into the walkie-talkie: "We have an American reporter who is writing about the Olympic bid, and he needs to visit an Olympic site here in Datun!"

There was a pause, and he looked up: "They're calling my supervisor."

Everybody waited. The ticketee suggested that we head a few blocks to the west, where a field had been cleared. The cop told him to shut up. The walkie-talkie crackled.

"Go west and look for a field with banners around it," the cop said to Driver Yang, and then he turned to me. "You'll see that it's a very good location to build the stadiums," he said, puffing out his chest. "They're going to put soccer, badminton, and tennis there."

Ordinary Chinese citizens often speak of sports in broad philosophical terms, especially when confronted with the fact that their national teams have not consistently excelled in the Olympic events that get the greatest attention. Some explain this failure as a simple matter of natural ability—that Westerners are bigger and stronger than Chinese—while others point to differences in psychology. I've met a number of Chinese who are intrigued by a sort of net theory: the notion that the Chinese do especially well at Ping-Pong, badminton, and volleyball because these are sports in which there is no direct contact between opponents. "The Chinese aren't as good at direct competition," the vice-president of the Chinese Olympic Committee, He Huixian, told me. "We're better at sports where there's a net between the players." Like many people I spoke with, she described the Chinese as *xiaoqiao*—dextrous and coördinated rather than strong. She added that, although the Chinese are naturally good at teamwork, traditional culture prevents the sort of individualism that inspires great athletes. "Confucianism makes people

The co-host of "All Things Considered" goes back to his roots.

With the wit and charm beloved by readers of his bestselling *Piano Lessons,* Noah Adams takes us on a journey through his native Appalachia. Along the way he tells the stories of other travelers, from the Cherokees on their Trail of Tears, to the white-water daredevils of today.

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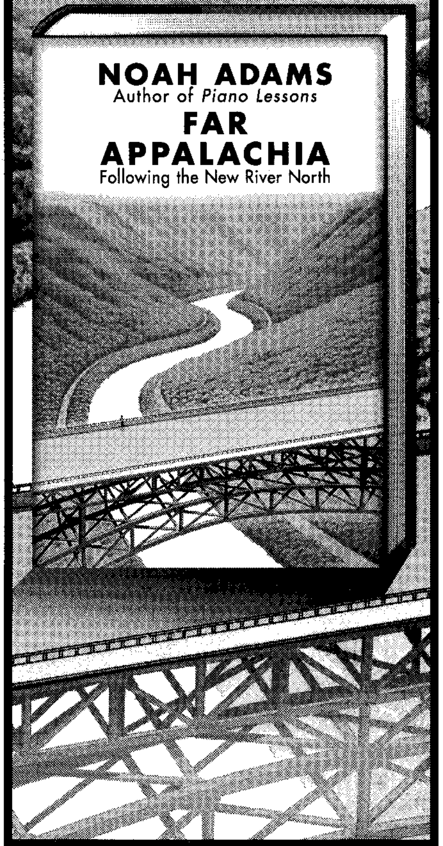

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more conservative," she said. "Look at America—children are taught to be independent and creative. In China, it's all about discipline."

A sense of inferiority underlies even the most dogged Chinese sports patriotism, and this nerve was deeply touched in 1993, when the I.O.C. awarded the 2000 Games to Sydney. Various reasons have been advanced to explain the decision: some observers believe that the criticism of human-rights groups swayed the vote, while others point to widely reported rumors that Australia successfully bribed members of the I.O.C. To the Chinese, however, the defeat fit neatly into a familiar pattern of mistreatment at foreign hands. The day after the I.O.C. vote, a China *Daily* editorial reminded its readers that the country had suffered a century of "brutal colonialist aggression and exploitation." Even for Chinese who don't turn to anti-colonialist rhetoric, the Olympics still highlight a crucial distinction between rich and poor countries.

"Developed countries see the Olympics as a kind of business," said Xu Jicheng, a tall, handsome television announcer who has accompanied the Chinese delegation to every Summer Games since 1988. "It's like they're saying, 'I have a big house, with all sorts of wonderful furniture, and I want to have a party and invite people to come.' And they sell tickets. But it's different for a developing country. The Olympics won't just change the economy and appearance of Beijing—the most important thing is that it will change our values and concepts."

When I asked Xu if he had any reservations about China's adopting a Western view of sports, he brushed the question aside, explaining that the issue was political rather than cultural. "I went to Seoul in 1988," he said. "Korean people told me that if it weren't for the Olympics nobody would know what Korea is. Before the Olympics, foreigners only knew about the Korean War."

In Xu's opinion, China should emulate the Western treatment of sports as a business. He pointed out that, in recent years, the government has begun turning over many of its national sports programs to corporate sponsors. Hilton cigarettes has funded the national basketball program, and Coca-Cola now supports Chinese soccer. "After fifty years, we'll be just like the Western countries," Xu predicted confidently. "The Olympics will be a kind of business to us. We'll be saying, 'We have a big house, and we want to invite you so we can show it off.'"

Driver Yang finally found an Olympics site at five-thirty. We got out of the cab and walked over to an empty field. It was the size of four city blocks, smack in the middle of northern Beijing; any buildings that had formerly stood on it had been cleared away. Pink flags on poles marked the perimeter.

"That's where they'll have soccer and tennis," Driver Yang said. He grinned and swung an imaginary racquet through the air.

"And badminton, right?" I said.

"Right."

We stood there staring at the empty field.

"Well," I said. "I should probably go home and get dinner."

On the Fourth Ring Road, we got stuck in traffic. The meter had been running for three hours, and a strong sense of anticlimax was building. I could feel Driver Yang's concern. Finally, he asked what I was doing for dinner.

"I don't have any plans," I said.

"Do you eat Chinese food or Western food?"

"Chinese is fine."

He said that it wouldn't take us long to get to his home, in Tongzhou, on the eastern outskirts of Beijing. He started talking about sports, and he told me that Mike Tyson was his favorite American athlete, because the boxer has Chairman Mao's face tattooed on his arm.

"Why do the Chinese people like Tyson?" Driver Yang asked. "Because he likes China. If he likes China, China likes him. And he understands China."

"Does Tyson really understand China?" I asked.

"If he doesn't understand China, why would he put a tattoo like that on his arm?"

Driver Yang told me his theory about why American athletes are so successful. "Americans win because their health is good," he said. "Americans are big. They eat very well from the time they're born, and also America is more scientific. If you take a country like China, a developing country, we can't compete with a country like America. Your health is important. Look at Tyson. If he wasn't so strong, how could he win?"

It was seven in the evening by the time we reached Tongzhou. Neon signs along the highway said "Beijing 2008" and "Welcome to the New Century's Tongzhou," and in the center of town was a McDonald's and a supermarket called Wumart. Driver Yang's house was a simple one-story dwelling, spacious but unheated. He introduced me to his

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wife, Yang Xueling, a squat woman with ruddy cheeks and close-cropped black hair. "This is a foreign reporter who is writing about the Olympics," he said. "I was with him all day, and I invited him to dinner."

She welcomed us into the dining room, then retreated into the kitchen. Driver Yang said that she was preparing a Mongolian hot pot.

He offered me tea, and we sat in the main room, warming our hands around the cups. Driver Yang showed me photographs of his children, both of whom were college educated. His daughter could speak English, he said proudly. I asked him about the English lessons that the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee had given to the cabbies, and he brought out a textbook and turned on his tape player.

Two voices, one male and one female, pronounced the words carefully: "Hello." "Good morning." "Good afternoon." As Driver Yang repeated the words, he leaned forward, straining against the language, and his voice shook with the effort. I flipped through the book and stopped at a section called "More Useful Expressions":

33. The city's traffic is getting better.
34. I'm attracted to Beijing's scenery.
35. Pollution is a global problem.
36. I am proud of being a Chinese.

Yang Xueling reappeared, and said that the hot pot was ready. She brought it out: a ring-shaped bronze container, filled with oil and spices, and set it on a trivet over a cup of burning alcohol. We sat down, and the room grew warmer as we dropped rolls of pink mutton into the boiling oil. The meal was good. We didn't talk about the Olympics anymore.

Three days later, I joined the I.O.C. representatives on their final inspection tour of Beijing. The I.O.C. is a curious organization. It elects its own members, and power is heavily centralized in the president and the executive committee. Although nearly seventy per cent of its operating funds come from American-based sponsors and television networks, the I.O.C. is politically dominated by Europe: nearly half of the hundred and twenty-three voting members are European. The People's Republic of China has three members. In voting terms, this means that the 1.3 billion Chinese have the same representation as the combined royal families of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Monaco, each of which currently has one I.O.C. member. Only thirteen of the commissioners are women, of whom two are princesses and one is a Spanish infanta.

Long criticized as élitist, the I.O.C. has a history of troubled interactions with the developing world, which has hosted only one Olympics—in Mexico City, in the summer of 1968. Prior to those Games, thousands of students protested that Mexico shouldn't be spending money on an event that would scarcely benefit the millions of Mexicans who lived in poverty. The Mexican government called out the troops, who fired on protesters, killing hundreds. The Games went on as planned, but since then the I.O.C. has not selected a developing country—and the Mexico City massacre, which is rarely mentioned in the Western press, has essentially disappeared from the popular view of Olympic history.

In recent years, the I.O.C. has struggled to improve its relations with the developing world by increasing its funding of sports centers and its contributions to the travel expenses of delegations to the Games. The I.O.C. has also expanded the committee's membership in an attempt to include a greater number of African, Asian, and South American representatives. But progress in this direction may have been slowed by the scandal that erupted in Salt Lake City in 1998, when the city tried to improve its chances of landing the 2002 Winter Games by dispensing more than a million dollars in cash and gifts to I.O.C. members. Representatives of poor countries made easy targets: of the ten members who resigned or were expelled for taking bribes, nine were from the developing world.

After the scandal, the I.O.C. banned gift-giving from the application process, as well as personal visits by members to candidate cities. This year represents the first time that these rules have been fully implemented, and it coincides with what has become a politically charged Chinese bid. On March 28th,

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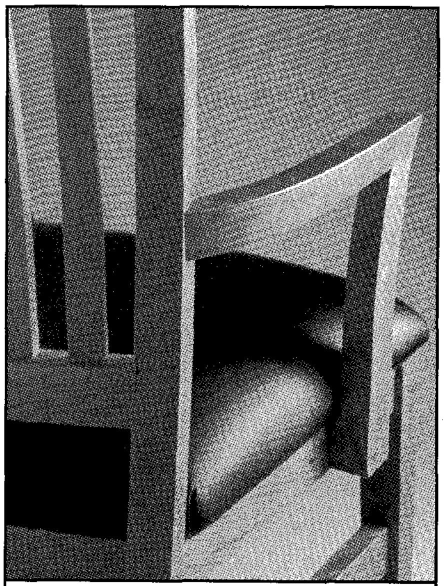

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the House International Relations Committee passed a nonbinding resolution declaring that China's bid be denied because of human-rights violations, and two Chinese dissidents were reportedly arrested after they signed a petition requesting that the I.O.C. pressure China to free political prisoners.

The I.O.C. may believe that the Games will provide impetus for China to speed up reforms. Within China, a significant faction seems to have adopted this view. I spoke with a number of officials and intellectuals who supported the bid largely because they felt that it would result in increased contact with the outside world. On March 30th, the anonymous authors of "The Tiananmen Papers" echoed this line in a piece on the Op-Ed page of the *Times* titled "The Olympics Can Help Reform." During the I.O.C.'s visit to Beijing, the Communist Party's most dogged opponents, the practitioners of Falun Gong, pointedly avoided displays of protest.

On the day that I went out with the inspectors, everything seemed to be going Beijing's way. The visit had gone smoothly, there had been no significant protests, and the city even had a Greek dome of a sky: hard and blue and cloudless, the wind coming strong from the north. The I.O.C. members had split up into two groups, and I accompanied five of them who were looking at potential competition sites. Four of the I.O.C. inspectors were European, and the fifth was Australian; they wore brand-new Mizuno jackets with "Evaluation Commission" embroidered on the left breast. The I.O.C. had imposed restrictions on what reporters could and could not do: we were free to take down anything the members and Chinese officials said to one another, but we were not allowed to ask questions.

We set out in a five-vehicle motorcade, led by a police car with flashing lights. Two lanes had been cleared for us, and hundreds of cops stood at attention along our route. Traffic was stopped; bicyclists stared; as if by magic, every light turned green. (The day before, the Chinese had taken the I.O.C. inspectors on a tour of the city's traffic-control center and demonstrated how signals could be monitored by remote.) Going east on Changan Avenue, we suddenly hit a red light, but it must have been a mistake, because we went through it anyway.

For the next three hours, the five commission members, along with Chinese officials and reporters, looked at the proposed sites for beach volleyball, water polo, softball, tennis, and weight lifting. Time was short, and we spent no more than about five minutes at each location. One of our stops was the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, where construction of an enormous new gymnasium was under way. Initially, the facility would be used for volleyball, but by 2008 it could be readied for the Olympic weight-lifting competition. At the site, everybody put on hard hats, and an economist named Liu Lieli led us on a tour. Like everyone else in the press pack, I tried to cling close to the I.O.C. members, hoping to catch anything they said.

We stood on what would one day be a spectators' gallery and gazed out over an expanse of packed dirt. Liu pointed out the future weight-lifting competition platform, where two workers were fiddling with a tarp. The Australian inspector spoke up. "Is that the warmup area?" he asked, pointing to a pile of dirt. The other reporters and I surged forward.

"*That's* the warmup area," Liu said, pointing to a different pile of dirt.

Peering into the shadows, the Australian inspector said, "Do the athletes go straight from there onto the competing platform?"

A murmur rippled through the press pack. Liu smiled. If Beijing was awarded the 2008 games, he replied, there was no question but that the weight lifters would proceed straight from the warmup area onto the platform. The Australian inspector nodded in satisfaction. Professor Liu turned to address the group. The new gymnasium, he said, would feature "intellectualized management systems." Then, as we were writing that down, he added, "When it is completed, it will look like a beautiful butterfly or a lovely U.F.O." ♦

From the Times.

Faulkner proclaimed the writer's only responsibility to be to his art. He famously claimed that if he had to rob his mother, he would not hesitate, and that "the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is worth any number of old ladles."

Not to mention old amphorae.

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

UNDER THE PROVENÇAL DEADLINE

BY BRUCE McCALL

Trudy and I had always dreamed of settling into some sunny southern European burg and turning our misadventures as hapless outsiders into publishing gold. But now, heading into this fourth sequel, even we wonder if maybe the vein hasn't been pretty much mined out. (*Editor's Note: A wonderfully felt paragraph, but the consensus here is that it's not an intro. Some of that old-time insouciance, please!*)

Pork and beans and Trudy's famous Jell-O salad again tonight. Yum! This snobby food-fetish thing—finding some exotic new recipe, hunting down the idiotically obscure ingredients, haggling with avaricious shopkeepers, fussing around in a steamy kitchen—to think how we used to dote on that whole precious foodie thing! Live and learn. That new supermarket, two towns over, is worth the drive for the frozen U.S. Parker House rolls alone. (*Editor's Note: Powerful stuff, but we worry that literal-minded readers just might think that you've become jaded, even a mite surly—"ugly American," so to speak. How about "We never stop marvelling at the locals' passion for fine food" and leave it at that?*)

Talk about a backwater! The video store has three Stallones and "The Sound of Music," dubbed. We caved last week and got satellite TV, first one in this broken-down community. Of course, the neighbors are all up in arms about the big dish. What a peevish bunch. And two-faced: any day now they'll be coming over and begging to watch some Brazilian soccer game, right in the middle of "The Sopranos." (*Editor's Note: Brilliantly, brutally honest. HOWEVER: I can understand how hard it must be by now to keep up the chipper, insouciant—that word again, but it fits!—tone of the first four books, yet I can't stress enough how inseparable that tone and your success have been. And, frankly, when you cashed the advance check we all thought you'd signalled your readiness to wear that lopsided, self-deprecatory grin for one more round. I don't want your millions of book-buying fans to sense that their American pal abroad isn't having a ball.*)

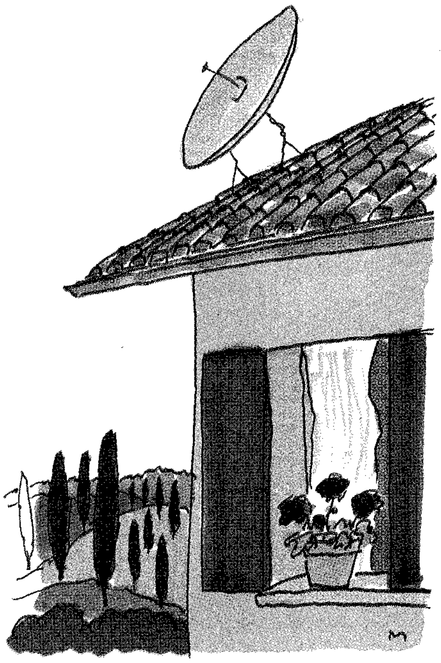
Trudy pointed out today that we haven't had a dinner invitation from a local in exactly one year. A-O.K. with us, if that's how they want to play it. We ran out of things to talk about with these yokels a lot longer than a year ago. "How soon are you returning to America?" That's the only damn question they could ever think of. (*Editor's Note: This is more of exactly what I mean. I have to delete the whole paragraph to save you from yourself. Where's the ingenuous guy with a dual-language dictionary who used to laugh off his gaffes and get all dewy-eyed just sitting in the town café?*)

The old bastard local winegrower had put a curse on our scraggly little vineyard, but until he tried running me down in the village today I hadn't quite realized the depth of his animosity. (*Editor's Note: Much better! I think if you make this funnier it can be a terrific little anecdote about your eccentric fellow-villagers. It was the way you came up smiling every time you were dumped on—the humility and the humanity—that made those first four books so great.*)

The phony little mayor and his delegation completely surrounded the house, their pitch torches blazing in the night. How ancient, Trudy and I wondered, was this local ceremony or vigil or whatever? Did they have a special name for it? Would they keep coming back, night after night? (*Editor's Note: Local color, outsider's awed perspective, Old World–New World interaction—splendid!*)

It was, the policeman assured me, just a few young bucks letting off steam. Tipping our car over the embankment—a prank, a "macho" thing, and absolutely nothing personal. He had a cousin who could come, perhaps tomorrow or the next day, and roll it back up the hill; please, some money for the long-distance call? I couldn't help thinking of the same situation back home: the endless waiting for the cops, the forms to fill out, lawyers and insurance agents and tow trucks, and certainly no mob of bystanders joking, calling out suggestions, making of it an occasion for fun. The gift for having fun—it was perhaps the best trait of this singular people, Trudy and I agreed on the long, long, long walk home. (*Editor's Note: You've regained the old stride—masterfully sketched!*)

I had finally broken the peasant's viselike grip on my wrist and handed over my gold Rolex; Trudy, meanwhile, was marvelling at the sauce his wife labored over at her ancient stove, stirring with a crooked forefinger and spitting what appeared to be tobacco juice into the pan. "Could I have the recipe?" Trudy inquired. "No! Get out, American bitch!" It would clearly take time, and patience, to glean the secrets of this kitchen. "Out! Out! Out!" The salty spirit, the utter lack of ambiguity—by now we knew it was no mere empty social ritual but pure, personal hostility. We had connected, outsiders no more. (*Editor's Note: What an ending! They're gonna love this! Not to jump too far ahead, but have you given any thought to a sixth book?*) ♦



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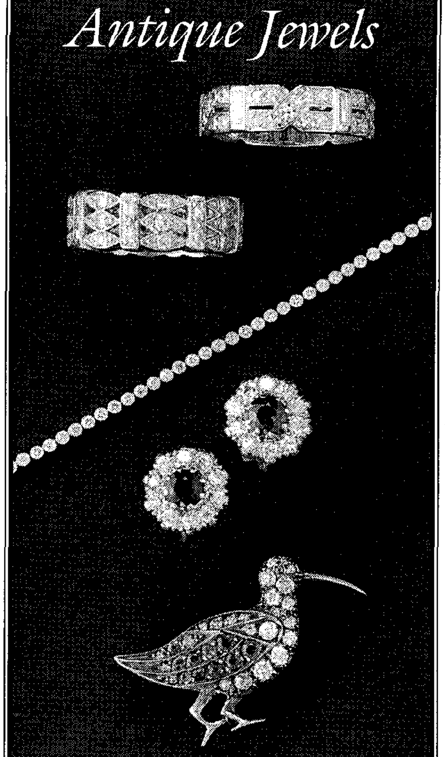

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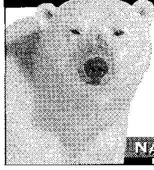

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ANNALS OF EMPIRE

THE AMERICAN RAJ

Pearl Harbor as metaphor.

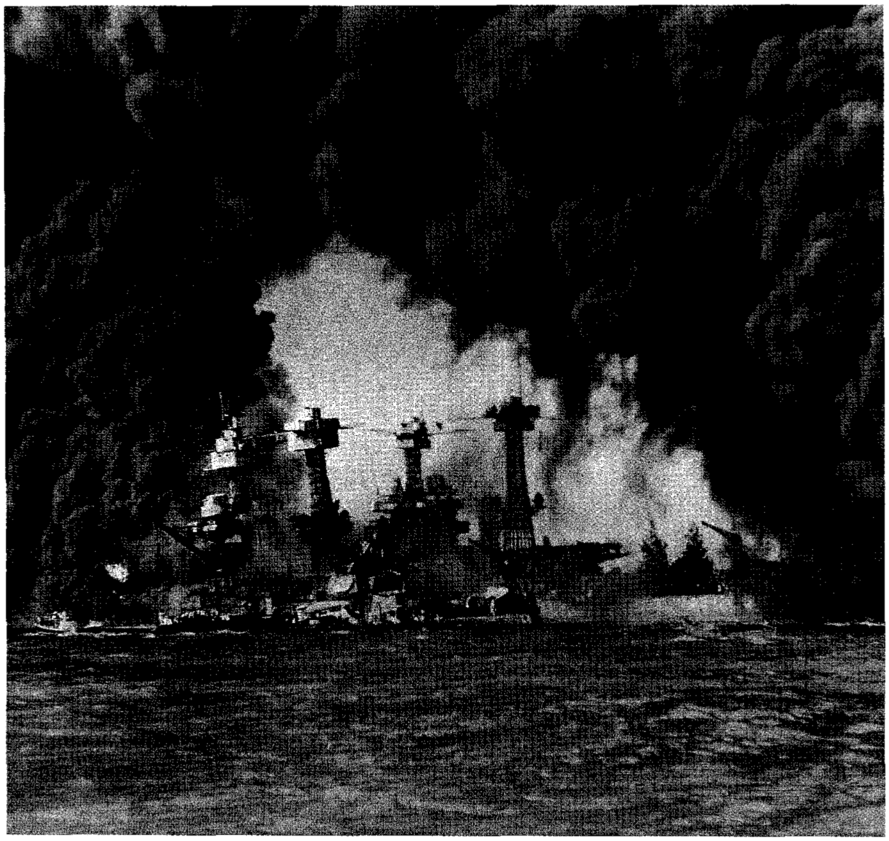
BY JOHN GREGORY DUNNE

On March 16, 1914, at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, three-year-old Henry Williams, Jr., the son of a Navy officer, inserted the first ceremonial bolt into the newly laid keel of BB-39, the thirty-ninth battleship built for the Navy since 1895. There is a photograph of the boy that day, smiling and holding the right index finger of the young and vigorous Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt. "I grabbed his finger and hung on for dear life," Williams recalled years later. "And they tried to get me away, and, of course, I was a little ham. F.D.R., being a bit of a ham himself, I guess he saw the possibilities." In the fall of 1916, BB-39, by then christened the U.S.S. *Arizona*, joined the fleet, and for the next quarter century it sailed the globe, representing the impregnable first line of the nation's ocean defenses. In those years, it was under the command of twenty-five different captains, some good, some not so good. One was court-martialled after the ship rammed a fishing boat off the California coast, killing two people. He was found guilty of culpable inefficiency and relieved of his command.

The *Arizona* entered Pearl Harbor on December 5, 1941, after an exercise off Oahu. Now commanded by Captain Franklin Van Valkenburgh, it was scheduled to depart on December 13th for overhaul and Christmas leave at its home port of Long Beach, California. Flying his flag on board as commander of Battleship Division 1 was Rear Admiral Isaac Kidd, who as a captain had commanded the *Arizona* between 1938 and 1940. The ship moored at Battleship Row, inboard of the repair ship *Vestal*, forward of the *Nevada*, aft of the *Tennessee*, the *West Virginia*, the *Maryland*, the *Oklahoma*, and the *California*. None of the three aircraft carriers attached to the Pacific Fleet were in port; the *Saratoga* was in San Diego, while the *Enterprise* and the *Lexington*, because of the tense diplomatic situation with Japan, were at sea delivering warplanes to Navy and Marine outposts on Wake and Midway Islands. Saturday morning, there was, as usual, inspection, followed by liberty for some of the crew, whose excursions often ended up in the whorehouses on Honolulu's Hotel Street, where working girls might turn a hundred tricks through the day and night. Officers remaining on board that evening could watch "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," starring Spencer Tracy and Ingrid Bergman, in the wardroom.

On Sunday morning, December 7th, more than a hundred ships, roughly half the Pacific Fleet, were in the harbor. At 7:55 A.M., as the *Arizona's* band and a Marine color guard prepared to raise the flag, a hundred and eighty-three Japanese fighters, bombers, and torpedo planes—launched from six carriers two hundred and thirty miles to the north—began a surprise attack on Pearl and military facilities all over Oahu. At 8:10 A.M., a bomb set off an explosion in the *Arizona's* forward magazine. The ship blew up and, nine minutes later, sank to the bottom, with the loss of 1,177 officers and men from its crew of 1,514; nine hundred of the dead were entombed in the wreckage, their bodies never recovered. Two of the K.I.A. were Admiral Kidd and Captain Van Valkenburgh; the force of the explosion was such that all that remained of Admiral Kidd was his Naval Academy ring, class of 1906, which was fused to the steel on the *Arizona's* conning tower. That evening, a lieutenant on a nearby ship stood on deck and, by the light of the inferno consuming what was left of the *Arizona*, read a newspaper update of the attack. The lieutenant was Henry Williams, Jr., who as a three-year-old had inserted the first bolt into the keel of BB-39.

Most of this information comes from "Battleship Arizona," an enthralling account of life on a capital ship in the pre-Second World War Navy that I picked up two years ago at a bookstore in Honolulu. Clear-eyed and unsentimental, it was written in 1991 by Paul Stillwell, the director of history at the U.S. Naval Institute and a reserve officer who served in Vietnam. The *Arizona* survived its first test in harm's way for just twenty-four minutes. Nearly fifty per cent of the military and civilian casualties of the attack were on the ship. Fifteen Medals of Honor were awarded for action that day on Oahu, all to Navy men. Two of the recipients were Admiral Kidd and Captain Van Valkenburgh. Brave they may have been, and heroes as well, but there was only a single survivor on the bridge, and he could not attest to specific acts of valor. Nations need heroes, and it is likely, as Stillwell suggests, that the awards to Kidd and Van Valkenburgh were motivated by the need to promote morale at a moment when the fallibility of military men and American might was in question.



Half of America's Pacific Fleet was in Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked.

GRANGER COLLECTION

The U.S.S. *Arizona* Memorial—the monument raised over the ship's sunken hulk in Pearl Harbor—is perhaps the most enduring symbol of Second World War combat. One legend attached to the *Arizona* is that it is still in commission, but in fact it was struck from the Navy register in December, 1942, as are all ships sunk as a result of enemy action; by special dispensation, the *Arizona* is allowed to fly the colors from a flagpole attached to its severed mainmast. Oil still bubbles up from the ship's tanks, spreading a sheen around the huge ghostly silhouette visible just beneath the surface. Engraved on one marble wall of the monument are the names, ranks, and ratings of all those on board who were killed on December 7th or who subsequently died of wounds suffered in that action: S1/c, ENS, Mu2/c, CBM, PhM2/c, MM2/c, PAYCLK, Bkr2/c, LCDR, QM2/c, RADM. Just beneath this list are sixteen names belonging to crew members who were among the survivors of the attack or were on liberty or detached service and had requested that when they died their ashes be commingled with those of their former shipmates. Divers placed their urns aft in the well of turret four.

What seemed a catastrophe at the time appears less so today. Through the perspective of history, 1941's day of infamy might now be seen as a propaganda victory of incalculable value. The first song I knew by heart was the rallying cry that jammed recruiting offices:

Let's remember Pearl Harbor
As we go to meet the foe.
Let's remember Pearl Harbor
As we did the Alamo.

That twenty-four hundred died was a shock then, but by the end of the war tens of thousands were killed nightly in air raids, and island combat decimated divisions. Left untouched at Pearl Harbor were four and a half million barrels of oil and high-octane gas, without which the fleet could not have stayed afloat; the oil reserves were an infinitely more valuable strategic target than the elderly gun platforms on Battleship Row. "The Japanese only destroyed a lot of old hardware," one admiral said of the twenty-one ships crippled or sunk in the attack. "In a sense they did us a favor."

The favor was in forcing the Navy to reconfigure the fleet: the carrier replaced the battleship as the fleet's primary weapon. There had been no more profound a change in naval tactics since the transition from sail to steam. Had the *Arizona* been salvaged, as were the *California*, the *Tennessee*, the *West Virginia*, the *Pennsylvania*, and the *Maryland*, it would have been a bombardment vessel, pounding shorelines with its 14-in. guns and providing a curtain of anti-aircraft fire against kamikazes. Six months after Pearl Harbor, the *Enterprise* and two other carriers, the *Hornet* and the *Yorktown*, sank four Japanese carriers at the Battle of Midway, not so much winning the war in the Pacific as insuring that Japan could not win it. Midway was not the beginning of the end but the American version of the end of the beginning.

This year is the sixtieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor. For the survivors, who are now mostly in their eighties or older, it will likely mark parade's end, the last post for memories that gentle their condition. Buglers will play taps, tears will flow, and the cloying confection of "the greatest generation" will be saluted yet again. On the sentimentalizing of generations I am in lockstep with Harold Rosenberg. "Except as a primitive means of telling time, generations are not a serious category," he wrote. "Belonging to a generation is one of the lowest forms of solidarity." NBC

"There are two ways we can go here—bark or bite."

plans a Tom Brokaw National Geographic special, while the other networks will show documentary footage of the carnage; old books will be reissued with new material and new books published pointing the finger and assessing the blame. The highlight of the commemoration will occur not on December 7th but on Memorial Day weekend, with the release of the hundred-and-forty-million-dollar Jerry Bruckheimer blockbuster "Pearl Harbor," a picture with the high-tech, high-hokum content that makes Bruckheimer such a glossy and entertaining filmmaker. (My wife and I once wrote an unproduced screenplay for him and his late partner Don Simpson—about U.F.O.s—and I have a popcorn weakness for his movies: "Con Air," "Armageddon," "Enemy of the State.")

Many clichés about Pearl Harbor and Hawaii have barnacled into fact. Even today, we hear, as we heard in the decades before the Japanese attack, that Oahu is the American Gibraltar, the fortress that keeps the Pacific free. This is a wishful improvement on the uneasy truth that Hawaii was, and to a certain extent still is, the headquarters of the American Raj, and Pearl Harbor the gateway to *mare nostrum*. Nearly a quarter of the land on Oahu is owned or controlled by the Defense Department, and sixteen per cent of the population is either in uniform or a military dependent. The result is that the military holds the strings to Hawaii's perception of its own survival. The bedrock belief of state politics is that any curtailment of the military presence threatens not only the local economy but national security itself. Such fears reinforce a hierarchical military class structure that has endured through both peace and war in Hawaii since early in the last century, when Congress began to realize the strategic value of its mid-Pacific territory.

The peacetime Navy was a hard place for hard men. "The scum of the earth, the mere scum of the earth," the Duke of Wellington cheerfully called the private soldiers who brought Napoleon to ground. "None but the worst description of men enter the regular service." A not dissimilar view of the enlisted ranks lingered in this country well into the century of the common man. After the 1929 stock-market crash and the onset of the Depression, the Navy became, in effect, a seagoing C.C.C., a refuge from unemployment, riding the rails, or the county farm. Discipline was fierce. With the tacit complicity of commissioned superiors, petty officers would sometimes physically assault sailors, either because the seamen did not measure up or simply because they wanted to. Minor offenses (such as spitting tobacco juice over the side on the *Arizona*) meant summary judgment, often incarceration in the brig on a bread-and-water diet ("piss and punk," in Navy slang—a form of punishment that lasted until after the war began). One prophylactic for venereal disease was to order infected sailors to drop their skivvies and show recruits the ravages of syphilis.

Yet men frequently stayed aboard ships such as the *Arizona* for years on end without transferring out. The ships were home and home town, their separate divisions strictly segregated neighborhoods; the engine room rarely mixed with the gunnery department, nor quartermasters with radiomen. This was not a world in which advanced democratic notions prevailed. There is no finer or more decent fleet commander in American naval history than Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, who won the Battle of Midway, but his social and political views were those that permeated wardroom and bridge in the years before the war, and after as well. Spruance, according to his biographer, Thomas Buell, believed that only "high-grade" citizens should have the suffrage, and once wrote, "So long as the Bill of Rights remains in effect, the American people will in the long run get about the kind of government they want and deserve."

With the entitlement of rank, the numerically small officer corps evolved effortlessly into a faux aristocracy, a ruling class contemptuous of politicians and the fragile civil authority. Implicit in the idea of a Raj is a subject people, a question of color. Officially, and in travel brochures, Hawaii is Bali Ha'i, a paradise where Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans mix with indigenous Hawaiians and *haoles* (whites) in a melting pot that stands as a glorious example to the world; more than sixty per cent of the population is of mixed blood. The tourist stepping off an airplane is immediately decorated with a lei and propelled into a colonial Eden of cloudless days, white sandy beaches, blue-green ocean, Duke Kahanamoku, Daniel Inouye, Don Ho, the lovely hula hands of Beverly Noa, the indefinable spirit called *aloha*. The reality is more nuanced; "Kill a Haole Day" is an island urban legend that periodically circulates in some high-school covens. Tourism has recalibrated the amalgamation of the races into part

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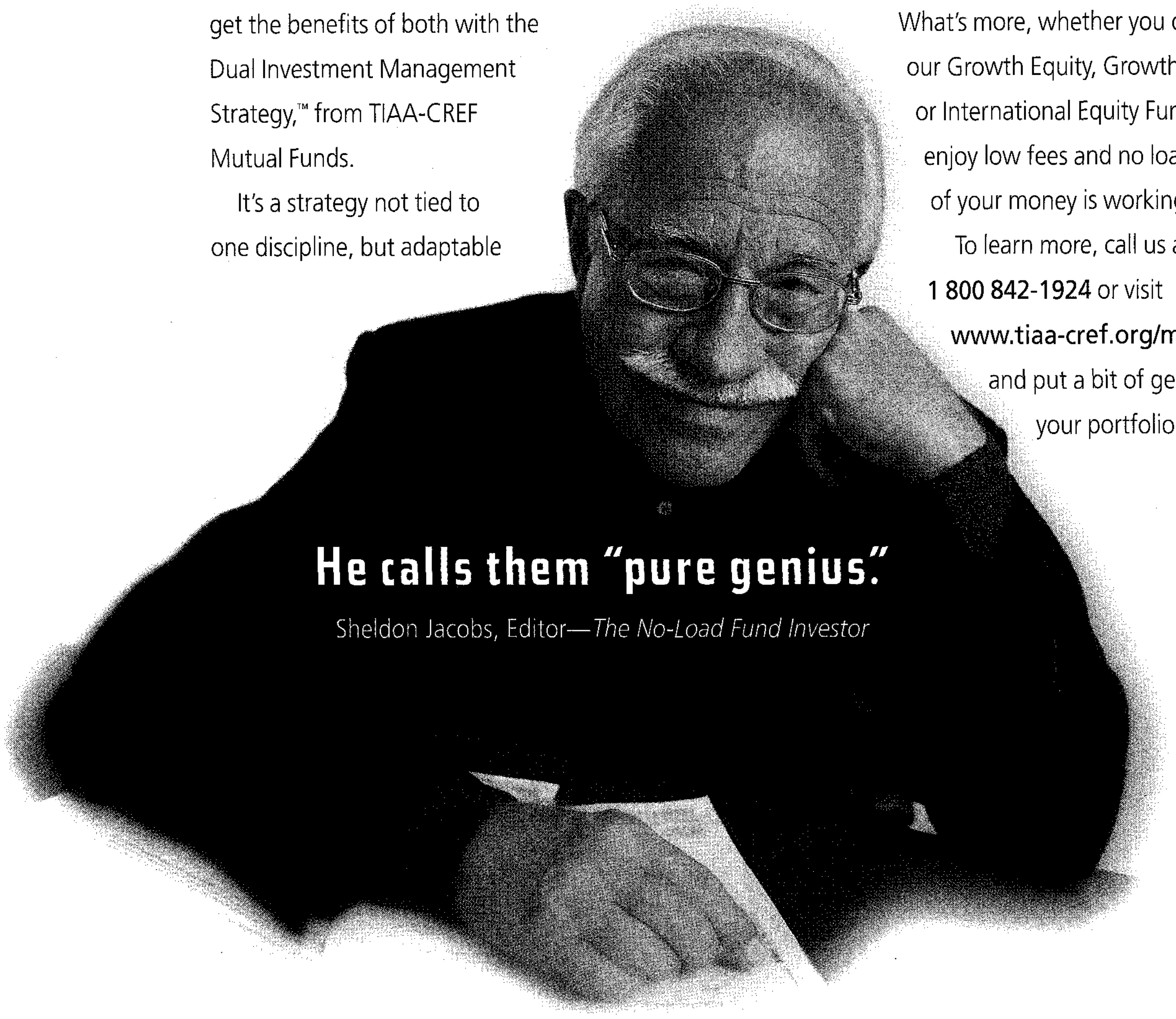

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of the visitor package. With their ukuleles, surfboards, outrigger canoes, and grass skirts, citizens of Hawaiian blood have been translated into photo props, local color useful for the economy. The relationship of the military to this local fantasy is at best provisional. In 1990, marines at the Pearl Harbor barracks, finding place-names spelled with the twelve-letter Hawaiian alphabet difficult to pronounce (Kalanianiole, Puupalailai), held a Rename the Islands contest. The winning entry for Kauai was "Bush Island," in honor of the then President.

In the decade before Pearl Harbor, the military generally scorned those whom Rear Admiral Yates Stirling, then commandant of the Fourteenth Naval District, called the "enthusiastic priests of the melting-pot cult." In 1939, Admiral Stirling published his autobiography, "Sea Duty," an extraordinary book that is almost a bible of Navy attitudes. "The Islands, as everyone should know," Admiral Stirling wrote,

> are overrun with a mixed population of 363,000, a great part being orientals, coming from the coolie class, practically the lowest class in the Orient. . . . There are scarcely 22,000 of the lithe, athletic people of pure Hawaiian blood left. The picturesque simple Hawaiian civilization, which everyone loved and made much over, I found had wellnigh passed away, never to return.

Racial condescension was matched by arrogance in tactical matters. During joint Army-Navy war games in February, 1932, the air group from the carrier *Lexington* simulated a surprise attack on Oahu military bases. Staged at daybreak Sunday morning, the strike prefigured the Japanese attack nearly ten years later, and by war-game rules demolished Pearl Harbor and other military facilities. When British naval planes destroyed the Italian fleet anchored at Taranto in southern Italy in 1940, the Navy still professed not to worry; the battleship was supreme. Submarines, in the minds of Navy brass, were the real threat. Although it was taken for granted that any war in the Pacific would be fought against Japan, Navy men subscribed to the opinion, most whimsically expressed by Vice-Admiral Wilson Brown, that Japanese airmen were "distinctly inferior to American fliers." Brown based his assessment not on intelligence reports but on remarks by the head of the Singer Sewing Machine subsidiary in Japan; the executive said that Singer would not let employees fly on Japanese commercial aircraft because they were so badly kept up, and by this reasoning military air power could not be much better.

During the thirties, the Navy collided head on with the melting pot in an episode that had the combustible elements of a cheap novel—sex, racism, murder, perjury, lynch law, inept cops, two trials, a world-class attorney, demagogic reporters, foaming editorials, political blackmail, loony congressmen, ass-kissing sailors, a homicidally hoity mother-in-law, vacillating bureaucrats, Presidential intervention, a miscarriage of justice, and finally the Pinkerton Detective Agency, which, after the dust had settled, sorted everything out. "The Massie case," as this lurid series of events came to be called, was rivetingly detailed in 1966 by Peter Van Slingerland in "Something Terrible Has Happened." The fuse was lit by Thalia Fortescue Massie, the twenty-year-old wife of Lieutenant (j.g.) Thomas Hedges Massie, Annapolis '27, a Kentuckian and the engineering officer on the submarine S-43, operating out of the Pearl Harbor Sub Base. Thalia Fortescue married Massie when she was sixteen, after his graduation from the Naval Academy, but she was not cut out to be a Navy wife. She was too young, too spoiled, too self-indulgent. She avoided marathon bridge games with other wives, took courses at the University of Hawaii, and perhaps mixed too much with the locals. The marriage was volatile. When Massie and Thalia were not fighting, they often were not speaking.

What happened in Honolulu on September 12, 1931, is evocative of what happened at the Marabar Caves in E. M. Forster's "A Passage to India" and at the Bibighar Gardens in Paul Scott's "The Raj Quartet." Saturday night was party night for junior officers and their wives, and the parties were fuelled, on these Prohibition evenings, by *okolehao*, a potent home brew distilled with fruit and whatever spirits were available. Reluctantly, Thalia accompanied her husband to a Honolulu club with several other couples. The tension between the Massies became fraught, and she joined a different Navy group, in a private room upstairs. The situation there was equally

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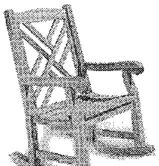

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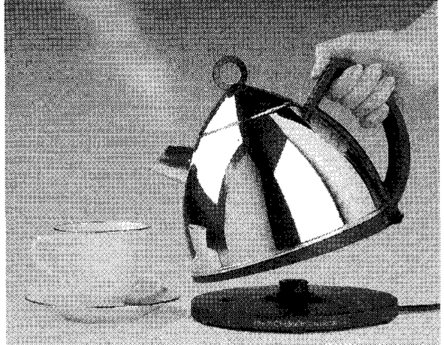
paradisal mayonnaise.

—*Eric Ormsby*

toxic. Thalia told an officer the worse for drink, and superior in rank to Massie, that he was "no gentleman," and the officer responded by calling her what Van Slingerland describes as "a more vivid epithet." Thalia slapped his face, and after wandering around the club, unwelcomed by anyone she knew, she disappeared into the night without telling her husband. When Massie discovered that she was gone, he was annoyed and worried, but this was not the first time an evening out had turned ugly. An hour or two later, he reached Thalia at home. "Something terrible has happened," she whispered into the telephone. How terrible he saw when he rushed to their house. Thalia had been battered, her jaw broken. She had, she said, been abducted by a carful of local men, beaten up, and taken to a remote area, where four, five, or six of them had raped her repeatedly.

In an incident that seemed unrelated to the Massie drama, an infuriated Hawaiian woman marched into police headquarters and demanded that officers arrest five young men with whom she and her *haole* husband had had an altercation after their cars nearly smashed into each other at an intersection. Although the woman was drunk, she had been sober enough to get the license of the other car. Police radio broadcast the plate number, the car was traced, and five men, all in their early twenties, all unemployed, were arrested—Horace Ida, David Takai, Henry Chang, Benny Ahakuelo, and Joseph Kahahawai. In the meantime, Lieutenant Massie had reported the assault on his wife. After taking a statement from Thalia Massie and examining the available evidence, detectives made a dangerous inductive leap: the men involved in the near-accident, who were now in custody, were also responsible for what in Honolulu was viewed as the most heinous of crimes—the rape of a white woman, and not just any white woman but the wife of a naval officer.

"Half-breed hoodlums" was the officers'-club description of the accused. Three had done time, one for assault, two for attempted rape. "Our first inclination is to seize the brutes and string them up on trees," Admiral Stirling told a subordinate. "But we must give the authorities a chance to carry out the law and not interfere. . . . It will be slow and exasperating." Thalia Massie was no longer seen as different, a trial to her husband, his fellow-officers, and their wives; she was Navy. "One of the younger set," Stirling wrote, "demure, attractive, quiet-spoken, and sweet, minding her own affairs. I knew her to be the daughter of prominent people in the Eastern States, raised in a cultured American home." Rumors that she might have been having an affair with another officer were not countenanced, nor was any hint that the case against the five accused left much to be desired. The time line necessary for abduction, battery, and multiple rapes was questionable at best, and rape itself medically problematic. Doctors who had examined Thalia after



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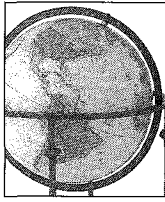

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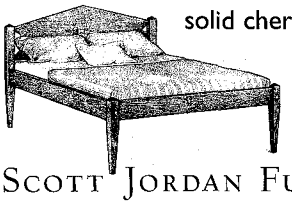

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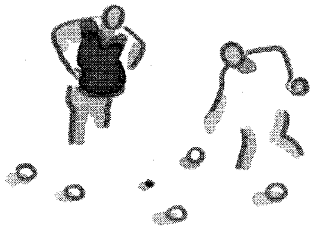
the attack reported that, while her vagina was dilated, there were no vaginal bruises or abrasions, and no seminal deposits. Nor was semen found on any of the accused or in their clothing or underwear. That the five men might not have committed the crimes with which they were charged was of small matter: to Navy men, innocent until proven guilty was a civilian value, worthless at the frontier of American empire. The important thing was a conviction that would set an example, maintain the principle of order, and reëstablish the social priorities.

It didn't happen. After deliberating for ninety-seven hours, a jury composed of five *haoles* and seven non-whites announced that it could not reach a verdict. "I was informed reliably that the vote of the jury began and remained to the end, seven for not guilty and five for guilty, the exact proportion of yellow and brown to whites on the jury," Admiral Stirling wrote in "Sea Duty." "The defendants were not men who might be given the benefit of a reasonable doubt." Admiral William Pratt, Chief of Naval Operations, went even further. "American men will not stand for the violation of their women under any circumstances," he said in a statement leaked to the press. "For this crime they have taken the matter into their own hands repeatedly when they have felt the law failed to do justice." Stripped to its essence, the statement sanctioned lynch law, and the message did not go unheeded. A group of sailors grabbed one of the five accused, all of whom were free pending a second trial, badly beat him up, and nearly pitched him off a cliff.

Thalia Massie's mother, Grace Fortescue, a Maryland grande dame who had come to Honolulu to be with her daughter, was hatching a more elaborate plan. She wanted to kidnap a defendant and force a confession that, she thought, could be used at a second trial. Her son-in-law lent a receptive ear to this folly. Their strategy called for a sailor to serve a summons on Joseph Kahahawai as he left the Honolulu judicial building to which he reported every morning. The sailor would push him into a car driven by Massie, and they would then drive to Mrs. Fortescue's house, where Kahahawai would be beaten at gunpoint until he confessed. The level of dementia at work could be seen in the heading of the crude, handwritten summons. "Teritorial [sic] Police," it read, in pencil. The delirium was compounded by a headline from a feature article in a Honolulu newspaper that was pasted onto the fake document: "Life Is a Mysterious and Exciting Affair, and Anything Can Be a Thrill If You Know How to Look For It and What to Do with Opportunity When It Comes."

Everything that could go wrong did go wrong. Within ten minutes of arriving at the house, Kahahawai was dead, with a steel-jacketed .32-calibre bullet in his chest. Massie, Grace Fortescue, and Edward Lord, one of two sailors who had been recruited as their accomplices, were stopped for speeding on their way to a remote volcanic site where they intended to dump the body into the ocean. They were arrested when the police found Kahahawai wrapped in a sheet on the back seat. Albert Jones, the other sailor, who had remained at the house to finish washing away the blood, was picked up later. "A life had been taken," Admiral Stirling wrote, "but was it a life worth saving?" Thalia Massie was a "martyred woman," and her husband had redeemed her honor.

What the Navy did not expect was that a *haole* judge would negotiate a second-degree-murder charge against the conspirators after a grand jury balked at returning a first-degree indictment. In Washington, Southern congressmen threatened to bring the territory of Hawaii under direct mainland supervision. The Hearst press called the case "The Honor Slaying," and ran an editorial saying, "The whole island should be promptly put under martial law and the perpetrators of outrages upon women promptly tried by court martial and executed." Not good enough for the Corvallis *Times:* "It should be death by torture." A columnist for a Los Angeles paper wrote, "The filthy hoodlums and woman attackers of Honolulu are not Hawaiians. There is not a full-bred Hawaiian among them. The problem rests with one of the strangest and



most fantastic potpourris of alien blood that was ever mixed into a hell's broth and forced on an innocent race."

Temporary insanity was the only plausible defense, and there was only one attorney to make it—Clarence Darrow, who had argued evolution with William Jennings Bryan in the Scopes trial and was able to keep Leopold and Loeb from the gallows for the murder of Bobby Franks. Now slowed by age—he was seventy-five—and ill health, the shambling, two-hundred-and-twenty-five-pound stem-winding orator suffered no illusions about the difficulty of his task. His clients had murdered Joseph Kahahawai; he would have to fight the case, he told an associate, in the press and in the court of public opinion. The composition of the jury—eight whites and four men of mixed blood—made Admiral Stirling uneasy. "Would the white men on the jury bow to the dictates of the orientals?" he wondered. Spectators paid fifty dollars for seats. To remove suspicion from his mother-in-law, Massie, an officer and a Southern gentleman, took responsibility for the gun's going off, although thirty years later one of the sailors told Van Slingerland that it was he who had pulled the trigger.

In a summation that lasted four hours and twenty minutes, Darrow missed none of the stops. Occasionally brushing away a tear, he invoked the Almighty, the flag, duty, home, motherhood, the sanctity of women, and the lust of those who had debased Thalia Massie. The prosecutor was succinct: "The best you can say for Massie is that he lied like a gentleman and had a very convenient memory." *Aloha* prevailed in the jury room; all four defendants were found guilty of manslaughter—a verdict calling for ten years at hard labor—with a recommendation for leniency. The fix, however, was already in; President Hoover and Congress had leaned on the territorial governor, who used his power of executive clemency to commute the sentences to one hour served. The only thing the governor did not offer was a pardon.

The Massies, Grace Fortescue, and Darrow left Honolulu for the mainland on a Matson liner. There was, however, a matter that authorities still had to consider—the hung jury eighteen months earlier that had ended the assault and rape trial and precipitated the murder of Joseph Kahahawai. It seemed unlikely that sufficient new evidence existed to warrant a retrial, but, since local police agencies had been so compromised during the initial investigation, the governor summoned the Pinkerton Detective Agency to make an impartial study of the evidence. Pinkerton delivered a two-hundred-and-seventy-nine-page report that found that it was "impossible to escape the conclusion that the kidnapping and assault was not caused by those accused, with the attendant circumstances alleged by Mrs. Massie." About the rape, the agency was unequivocal:

> We have found nothing in the record of this case, nor have we through our own efforts been able to find what in our estimation would be sufficient corroboration of the statements of Mrs. Massie to establish the occurrence of rape on her.

The Navy has always been the most feudal of the services, the most class-conscious, the most in thrall to an Academy ring. Across the generational and cultural divide, it was the service most resistant to President Truman's 1948 order integrating the military. In 1966, Raymond Spruance, then eighty and deservedly rich in military and civilian honors, was awaiting surgery. "It has been interesting, while sitting around the Army hospital, to observe the considerable number of Negroes on duty," Thomas Buell quotes him as writing to the director of naval history. "I would not desire to have a ship manned with them." Pearl Harbor has been an available metaphor for the Navy, the symbol of heroic sacrifice that rendered its social rigidity irreproachable. It is the metaphor invoked when congressional critics seek to cut its budget, the memory tripped when some gaffe at sea threatens embarrassment. It was, inevitably, the name recalled in February when the nuclear-powered submarine *Greeneville* sliced up from the deep off Oahu, right into the hundred-and-ninety-foot fishery training ship *Ehime Maru*, tearing a hole in the hull that sank the vessel in moments, and killing nine of those on board, including two instructors and four teen-age students.

The stricken vessel was Japanese, the accident happened "off Pearl Harbor," a location indefinite enough to cover practically the entire leeward coast of Oahu (the collision actually took place off Dia-

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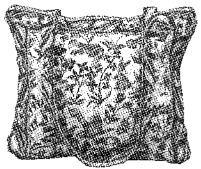
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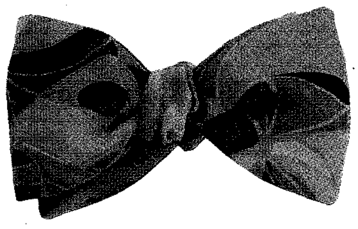
mond Head). For the Navy, it was as if the propitious conjunction of "Japanese" and "Pearl Harbor," with all the attendant memories, would lessen the impact of a maritime and public-relations disaster. The *Greeneville*, as it happened, was not even supposed to be at sea that day; the trip was laid on for sixteen V.I.P.s and big-ticket political contributors, called "D.V.s," Navy talk for distinguished visitors. On a D.V. cruise, the *Greeneville* was essentially reduced to an underwater theme park, Submarine Land. The D.V.s would sit at the controls, look through the periscope, experience combat training exercises, have lunch with the captain, Commander Scott Waddle, Annapolis '81. Climaxing the February trip was a maneuver known as an emergency blow: air was forced into the main ballast tanks, and the boat shot straight up, breaking the surface like a ballistic missile. Commander Waddle's periscope scan of the horizon before the blow was perfunctory; he saw planes landing at Honolulu Airport, but he did not see the *Ehime Maru*, which was heading straight for the spot where he would surface.

Through the Japanese consul in Honolulu, Commander Waddle apologized to Japan's Prime Minister and to the families of the nine dead, taking responsibility. In an interview with *Time* magazine, however, he spoke of the effect of the accident on him, about his suffering and his pain, focussing somehow more sharply on his own victimization than on the ship he sank and the lives he cost. He was selling himself as Job ("Job is the closest corollary to what has just happened in my life"), and *Time* packaged the sale. Tearfully and artfully, he stepped back from responsibility and spread blame around as if it were manure. "This was something I had no control over," he said. "I couldn't change what happened. . . . I didn't cause the accident. I gave the orders that resulted in the accident." On Commander Waddle's behalf, some Navy people put forth what might be called a Massie Defense. "The Japanese boat was the ocean's version of a Ford Pinto," John Peters, a retired submarine skipper, told Elaine Sciolino of the New York *Times*. "The hole was caused by the sub, but the sinking and loss of life was not. It's like a normal car accident, but the car belongs to the mayor so it's not investigated as a normal accident. We're mixing a Navy investigation with politics. Things are starting to smell."

An editorial in the Honolulu *Advertiser* raised the historic sense of purpose: "We must not forget that it is the mission of the *Greeneville* and the rest of the Pacific Fleet to keep the sea secure for vessels such as the *Ehime Maru*." In the Washington *Post*, Richard Cohen was just damn sick and tired of all the wimpy apologizing, especially to Japan, which has never owned up to the Rape of Nanking, Korean sex slaves working in Japanese military brothels in the Second World War, and other perfidies. "This was Hawaii, for crying out loud," Cohen wrote in his column. "So, one more time: we're sorry . . . and of course we apologize for the loss of the *Ehime Maru* and the apparent deaths of nine persons aboard. But we are the same guys who have provided Japan with a security shield ever since World War II, helped rebuild the country and have been its steadfast ally and best friend. Don't make *us* sorry." One senses that Cohen had to restrain himself from using the word "Nips," for crying out loud.

In the wake of the *Greeneville* inquiry, the Navy has resumed D.V. tours. Not even the tours will have the good-feeling impact of the Bruckheimer version of Pearl Harbor. Produced with the full coöperation of the Navy and the Defense Department, it will probably become the "Titanic" of war flicks. Audiences will feel a pull of pride at the way men behaved at Pearl and Schofield Barracks and all the other bases on Oahu on December 7, 1941. By the end of the picture's opening weekend, the *Ehime Maru* may be seen as the last Japanese casualty of the day of infamy, and the ruined career of Scott Waddle conflated with the dead on the *Arizona*. Commander Waddle is certainly doing his part, with the Navy acting as his complicit enabler. Navy brass allowed *Time* and NBC's "Dateline" (which ran an hour-long special on the incident) unlimited access to him and to Pearl Harbor and its facilities. *Time* photographed Waddle standing beside a narrow channel in front of his house at the base, saluting the *Greeneville* as it returned to sea under a new captain. To call this staged photo op contemptible would be to miss the point: it was an anchors-aweigh moment that confirmed the rule of the Raj over *mare nostrum*. ♦



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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

THE QUIET MAN

Dick Cheney's discreet rise to unprecedented power.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

If I were entering a contest to win a dream date with Dick Cheney, here is what I would say: We would definitely go fishing. Not bait fishing, which is for amateurs, a category that does not include Cheney, but fly-fishing. Way up in the Wind River Range of Wyoming, someplace beautiful and remote like that. We'd make camp, and then we'd get up before dawn and go out on the river. You have to be cool and patient and quiet to be a good fly fisherman—that's Cheney. We'd spend the whole day out there, just working the pools, not talking. With Cheney you do a lot of not talking. Maybe every hour or so, I'd ask him a question, and he'd answer with a "yep" or a "nope" or a "little bit," nothing more. Any fish we caught, we'd throw them back. Then at the end of the day we'd build a fire and Cheney would make dinner—he's a really good cook, just basic American stuff, though, spaghetti and chili and stew. But I would tease him about how bad his cooking is. That's one of the rules with Cheney: he won't tease you, but you can tease him—under that masculine proviso by which you can express affection only through patently unmeant insults—and he kind of likes it.

One thing that would be sure not to happen would be Cheney starting in with the big-shot, puffed-up Washington talk. He's still real. But maybe, around the fire, relaxed, I'd work up the nerve to ask him what he really thought about the important matters he deals with, and maybe, if the date was going well, he'd answer, laconically, but I'd know I could take it to the bank. Gorbachev? He'd tug the corner of his mouth down, the way he does. Unrealistic, ambitious, fancy-pants: no need to spell it out, the meaning's clear. Alan Greenspan? "Good man." With Cheney you learn not to interrupt; sometimes there's one sentence and then quite a long time passes before the next sentence. "Patriot."

And then after we'd packed up and gone home my wife would say, "So, what did you talk about all that time?" And I'd say, "Well, we didn't really talk. We just fished."

I doubt that my entry would win—there's too much competition. Vice-President Cheney is a man with a powerful anti-charisma. The way he got to be chairman of the Halliburton Company, supposedly, is that he was on a fishing trip (fly-fishing, of course) on the remote Miramichi River, in New Brunswick, with a bunch of big corporate names—their dream date. After a long, silent day, he decided to turn in early. The businessmen were sitting around talking and the conversation turned to how Halliburton needed a new C.E.O. After a while, somebody said, "What about ol' Cheney?" Since he was asleep in the lodge, he couldn't gruffly protest that he'd never worked in business, but his mysterious silent magic was permeating the place—so that was it, he got the job.

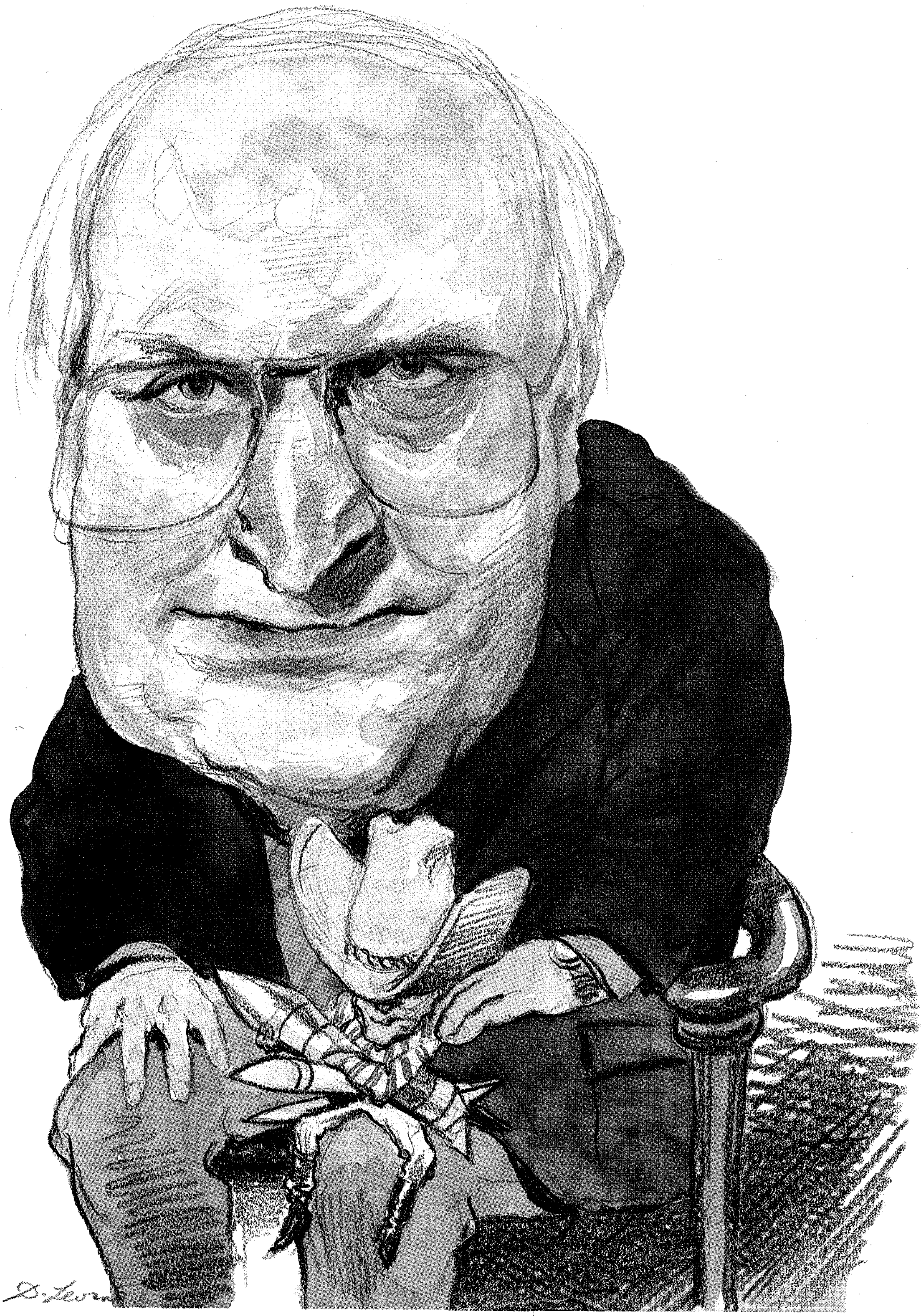
It is not obvious from a distance why Cheney has such a powerful effect on powerful people. Last summer, when George W. Bush launched his dream date by announcing Cheney's selection as the Republican Vice-Presidential nominee, after a flurry of sudden activity involving Cheney's changing his voter registration from Texas to Wyoming, those who were unfamiliar with him saw, standing next to Bush, a gray, bald, thickset man with glasses and a blank face, who spoke in bland, opaque phrases. Cheney's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention came across as a thudding, familiar attack by a Party functionary. On the campaign trail, he was almost hilariously awkward and brusque, the corporate executive miscast as political stumper. One of Cheney's friends told me that he went so far as to send an E-mail to the campaign saying, "Get Dick out of those goddam classrooms!"

To the unanointed, Cheney's debate with Joseph Lieberman, in October, made it clear for the first time what Bush saw in him. He has a way of answering questions about government policy which communicates the feeling that he has really mastered it, that he isn't just spouting prepared talking points. One should think of the debate, though, as the merest peek at what underlies the cult of Cheney. It is part of the basis of the cult that Cheney has none of the easy extroversion of the typical politician. Instead, there are those long—to the uninitiated, uncomfortably long, and forbidding—silences. "He's the coldest fish there is," one person who has dealt with him says. He typically does not thank subordinates for their work, signalling his approval simply by assigning more work; he does not react when being briefed; and he does not make light conversation. A former aide of Cheney's told me this story: "When I went to work for him and we were alone in a car for the first time, I tried to chat with him. It was like trying to talk to Gary Cooper. Then I switched to legislation, and he came on. The parts of his brain reserved for small talk and popular culture have been emptied out and refilled with public policy. When he was in the House"—in the nineteen-eighties—"we had to tell him who Madonna was."

The lack of panache enhances Cheney's mystique, because it confers on his more forthcoming private moments the feeling of "Why, Miss Jones, when you take off your glasses and let your hair out of that bun, you're really quite lovely!" Also, in the rarefied subculture Cheney inhabits—that of Washington's very few most expert and inside players—there is a periodic table of virtues and flaws, understood but not written down, and Cheney has almost all the virtues and almost none of the flaws. The way he plays the game is so impressive that it obscures, to a remarkable extent, the ideological end to which he is playing it.

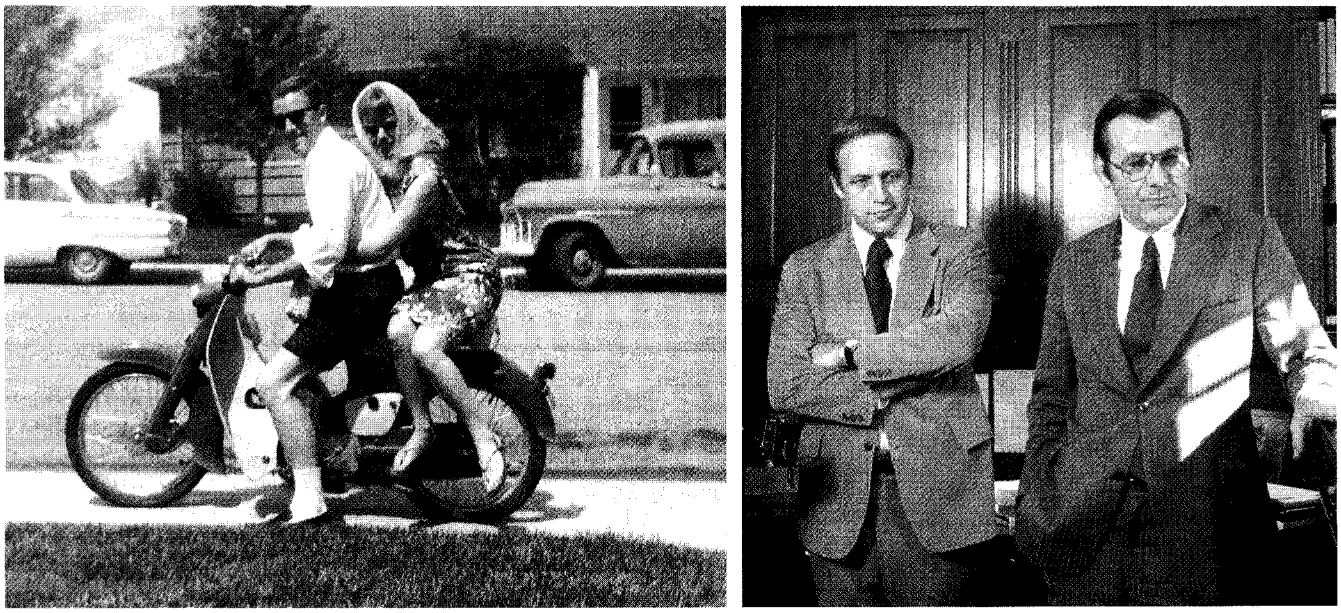
People who have been prominent in

DAVID LEVINE



George W. Bush said, "When you're talking to Dick Cheney, you're talking to me. When Dick Cheney's talking, it's me talking."

politics and government for some time begin, alarmingly, to speak to their friends as if they were speaking on television, too heartily and in orotund clichés. Cheney doesn't. He doesn't drop people (except maybe for cause); he is close to half a dozen friends from his high-school days, in Casper, Wyoming. They're all still with their first wives, whom they married while they were in their twenties. There are lots of stories involving Cheney going far out of his way to attend a funeral or a hearing or a ceremony involving an old friend, just to sit quietly in the back, rather than asking to be the featured attraction.



Cheney with his wife, Lynne, in Casper, in 1962, and Donald Rumsfeld, whom he succeeded as White House chief of staff, in 1975.

LEFT: COURTESY CHENEY FAMILY; RIGHT: BETTMANN/CORBIS

Cheney doesn't engage in histrionics. His friend Kenneth Adelman, the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the Reagan Administration, says, "His personality never gets in the way of solving the problem. You don't have to deal with Dick and the problem, just the problem. It's the opposite of Kissinger." Often, aides to a Washington big shot will conduct a private traffic in negative anecdotes; this is not the case with Cheney. He may not talk to the people who work for him, but he trusts them and gives them authority, he takes the time to master the substance of their work, and, most unusual, he protects them. Once, when Cheney was Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, then an under-secretary and now Deputy Secretary, asked his permission to brief a *Times* reporter on a change in the Administration's arms-control policy. Cheney said O.K. The briefing took place on a Friday, and the story came out on Saturday—but the plan had been for President George H. W. Bush himself to announce the change on Monday. Cheney called in Wolfowitz on Monday morning and, according to somebody else who was there, said, "The President is seriously pissed."

"So what did you tell him?" Wolfowitz said.

"I said, 'Mr. President, that was my idea,' " Cheney said. Nobody ever does that in Washington.

There is also in Cheney a quality that is invisible from a distance but that helps account for why he is where he is. Not long ago, I interviewed him in his office at the White House and got some feeling for the way he comes across in person.

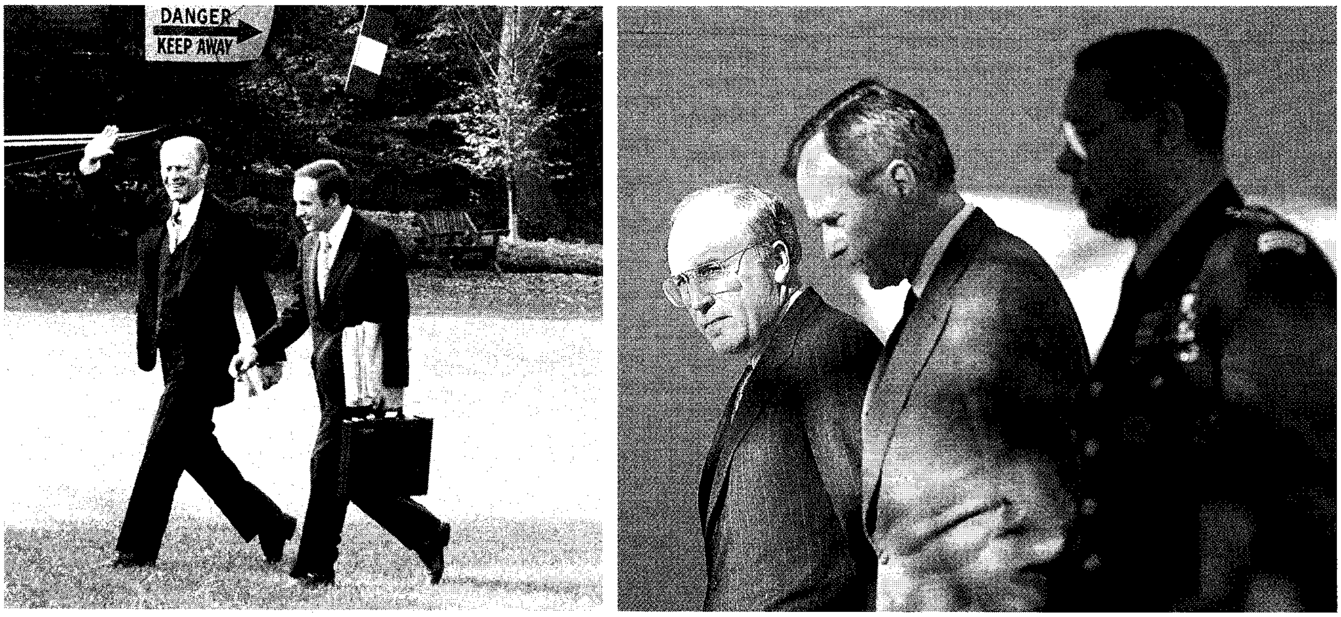
Mary Matalin, the Republican political operative turned conservative cable-television host, who has joined the White House staff as Cheney's counsellor, led me through a door, down a corridor, around a corner into an antechamber crammed with three people and their desks, and finally into Cheney's office, which is unusual for being one of the few relatively spacious places in the West Wing. The Vice-President was sitting behind a desk, and when we came in he stood up, came around to shake hands, and had us all sit in an arrangement of armchairs and sofas at the other end of the room. Cheney's appearance was as Washington-anodyne as it's possible to get: he was wearing a navy-blue suit, black tasselled loafers, a white shirt, a dark tie with an almost invisible pattern, and a gold Rolex watch.

"So, I understand you've been doing a lot of diggin' around," he said, amiably, as we settled in. "I keep coming across people you've talked to."

Enough pleasantries. I asked Cheney whether he thinks there is a main organizing event in the world today, the equivalent of the end of the Cold War when he was Secretary of Defense. He gave me a notably dour answer. "Well," he said, "that's—I think it's much more difficult to say. Back at the time when I was at the Pentagon, ten years ago, the world had been arranged in a certain way throughout the postwar period, into the eighties. And because the Soviets represented a strategic threat to the United States—they could potentially threaten our very existence—we were organized from a military standpoint, and to some extent from an economic standpoint, to deal with that. When the Soviet threat went away, it was clearly a world-shaking event. The reunification of Europe, the end of the Cold War—it was fairly easily identified.

"It's much more difficult now. Whatever the arrangement is going to be in the twenty-first century is most assuredly being shaped right now. I don't think there's any question but that the

United States will continue to be the dominant political, economic, and military power in the world. There are big questions about how the rest of the world will arrange itself." Cheney seemed to be relaxing into the answer, and as he did his language began to shade from officialese to a John Wayne patois. "Big question about what happens in Russia. Hundred and fifty million people. Nuclear-armed residue of the old Soviet Union. And some of the political institutions continuing from the Cold War period. Not clear yet how much of a nuclear structure they really have. Have so far made an incomplete transition to a market economy. How that sorts out over the next ten or twenty years is going to be very important, and the rest of the world has to care, because they're still sittin' on top of a large inventory of nuclear weapons. Big question about China. Although I think the prospects for China, in terms of its economic progress, are probably brighter than they are for Russia. . . . Much safer to invest in China than it is to invest in Russia these days."



Cheney with President Gerald Ford, in 1975, and with President George Bush and Colin Powell, during the Gulf War, in 1991.

LEFT: BETTMANN/CORBIS; RIGHT: JEAN LOUIS ATLAN/CORBIS SYGMA

Cheney went on to discuss the situation in Europe, in a low, plainspoken, almost growling tone of easy authority. Sometimes he would tilt his head to the side or make a slight gesture—nothing outside the range of theatricality you'd get from a small-town banker. He was alert and attentive, but always underplaying it. If he had been talking about an interest rate, he would have been dull, but the momentousness of the topic and his air of calm made him seem commanding.

I asked Cheney whether it still makes sense to talk about "the threat," as we used to do during the Cold War.

"No, the threat's much different today, I think," he said.

What is it?

"Well, in terms of the United States, the fact is that there are still regions of the world that are strategically vital to the U.S., where we care very much about whether or not they're dominated by a power hostile to our interests. . . . And anything that would threaten their independence or their relationships with the United States would be a threat to us. Also, you've still got to worry a bit about North Korea. You've got to worry about the Iraqis, what ultimately develops in Iran. But beyond that, in terms of a threat to the U.S., and our security, I think we have to be more concerned than we ever have about so-called homeland defense, the vulnerability of our system to different kinds of attacks. Some of it homegrown, like Oklahoma City. Some inspired by terrorists external to the United States—the World Trade towers bombing, in New York. The threat of terrorist attack against the U.S., eventually, potentially, with weapons of mass destruction—bugs or gas, biological, or chemical agents, potentially even, someday, nuclear weapons. The threat of so-called cyberterrorism attacks on our infrastructure, obviously very sophisticated in terms of being based on our intelligence infrastructure."

What can we do to reduce those threats?

"In terms of the threats to the United States, the terrorism of various kinds, probably intelligence is your first line of defense," Cheney said. "You need to have very robust intelligence capability if you're going to uncover threats to the U.S., and hopefully thwart them before they can be launched."

The talk of threats led naturally to missile defense, the idea of developing the capability to intercept nuclear strikes in midair, which is a long-standing conservative cause being revived by the Bush Administration. For decades, America's chief defense against nuclear war has been making sure that the main nuclear powers, including us, knew they would be subject to deadly retaliation if they launched a strike; the dream behind a national missile-defense program is one of the United States protecting itself by itself. I reminded Cheney that the military and our allies are skeptical about missile defense: it's expensive, early field tests have been unsuccessful, and we already have a peacekeeping system in place. Why do we need it?

Cheney looked at me a little sharply. "What's the peacekeeping system?" he asked, as if it were self-evident that we don't have one.

"What is it?" I was flustered.

"Yeah."

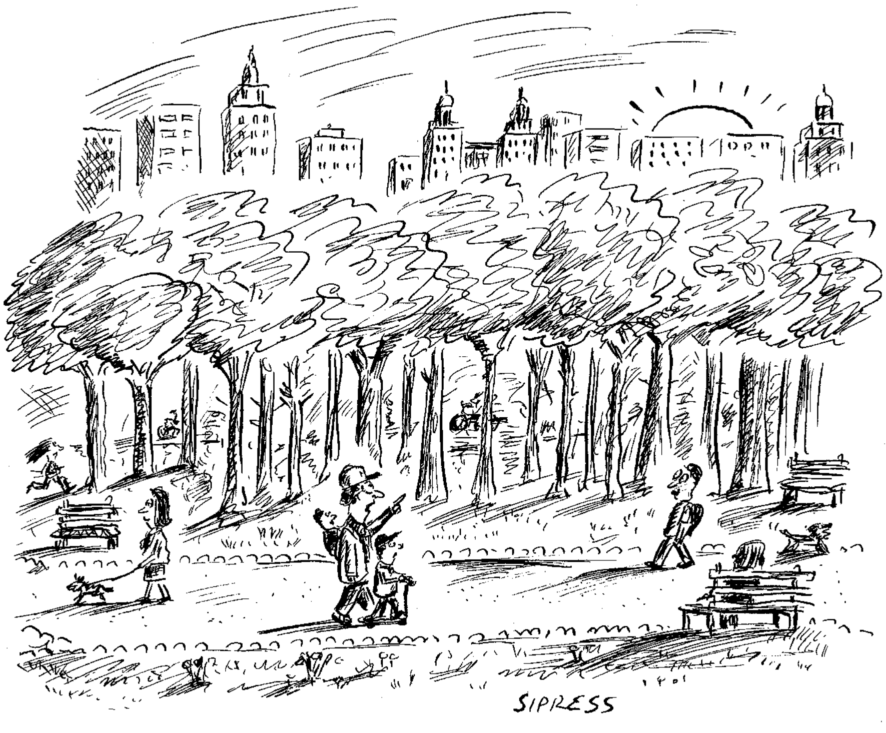
"Our normal arms-control process and our existing diplomatic relations with other nations."

"Yeah, but let's look at that for a minute," Cheney said. He seemed to have decided to let up on me—to switch from challenging to persuading. "What we had—we have now, what's in place today, is the arms-control arrangement with the Russians. Part of that is the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which was negotiated with the old Soviet Union, thirty years ago. But it's now pretty well out of date. That old structure, mutual assured destruction, didn't make a lot of sense once the Soviet Union went out of business. Today," he went on, "that old bipolar world has been replaced by one in which there is a significant proliferation problem. And for us to ignore that emerging threat—it's clearly there. That threat is growing. Today, because we have been constrained by the ABM treaty, we have not been able until now to aggressively pursue the development of defenses against ballistic missiles. And we think it's time to do so."

Cheney contrasted the Clinton Administration's missile-defense policy, which involved developing the means of defending only against attacks on the United States, with the Bush Administration's much more hawkish approach, in which we would place missile-defense equipment all over the world. "I think it's important not just to be able to defend the United States against a missile launch from a rogue state," he said. "I think it's important for us to be able to deal with that threat that would be directed at our allies, as well as us. Just ask yourself how successful we would have been in 1990 and '91, putting together a coalition of thirty nations to roll back Iraqi aggression in the Gulf, if Iraq had been in possession of a handful of ballistic missiles with nuclear weapons on board, and been willing to threaten to use those against any nation that sent troops to liberate Kuwait. I think you're going to have a very different response than we had. You're going to have to deal with that kind of threat in the future."

Cheney was facing me, an even look on his face. His legs were crossed in the Western-male manner, with the ankle of one leg resting on the knee of the other. His voice was deep, low, and clear—strong but not loud. The way the lower-right corner of his mouth pulls downward when he speaks connotes an ordinary man's matter-of-fact pessimism—or, in rare flashes, when it pulls upward, an urge to mirth so deeply suppressed that it could never make it all the way to the surface, only near. Afterward, when I listened to our conversation on tape, I was struck by how strong the theme of peril to the United States had been—struck because, as Cheney was talking, my main sensation had been one of immense reassurance. His presence had an effect like that of being hooked up to an intravenous line that delivers a powerful timed dosage of serotonin reuptake inhibitors. Everything felt kind of evened out, no highs, no lows. He wasn't going to be flaky or half-baked, he wasn't going to let his emotions distort his views, and he certainly wasn't going to be soft or naïve. But whenever he suggested something that, coming from somebody with a more animated manner, might be taken to indicate a swashbuckling inclination, like that "very robust intelligence capability," his rocklike manner made it sound like the very least we could do, unless we wanted to be foolhardy.

All the time Cheney was talking, I was imagining what it must be like for President Bush to get hooked up to the I.V. several times each day, the first dose coming at eight in the morning. The power of that reassurance fix surely outweighs the political disadvantage of having had a running mate who brought with him only three electoral votes, which would have gone Republican anyway. "Not many people go into this business without having a sizable ego of their own," says Vin Weber, who served in Congress with Cheney in the eighties. "And then they have to make investments in other people. Cheney has an almost unique ability to make powerful people feel comfortable investing in him." It is hard to say where this ability of Cheney's comes from, but what is clear from the story of his life is that it became evident at a remarkably young age.



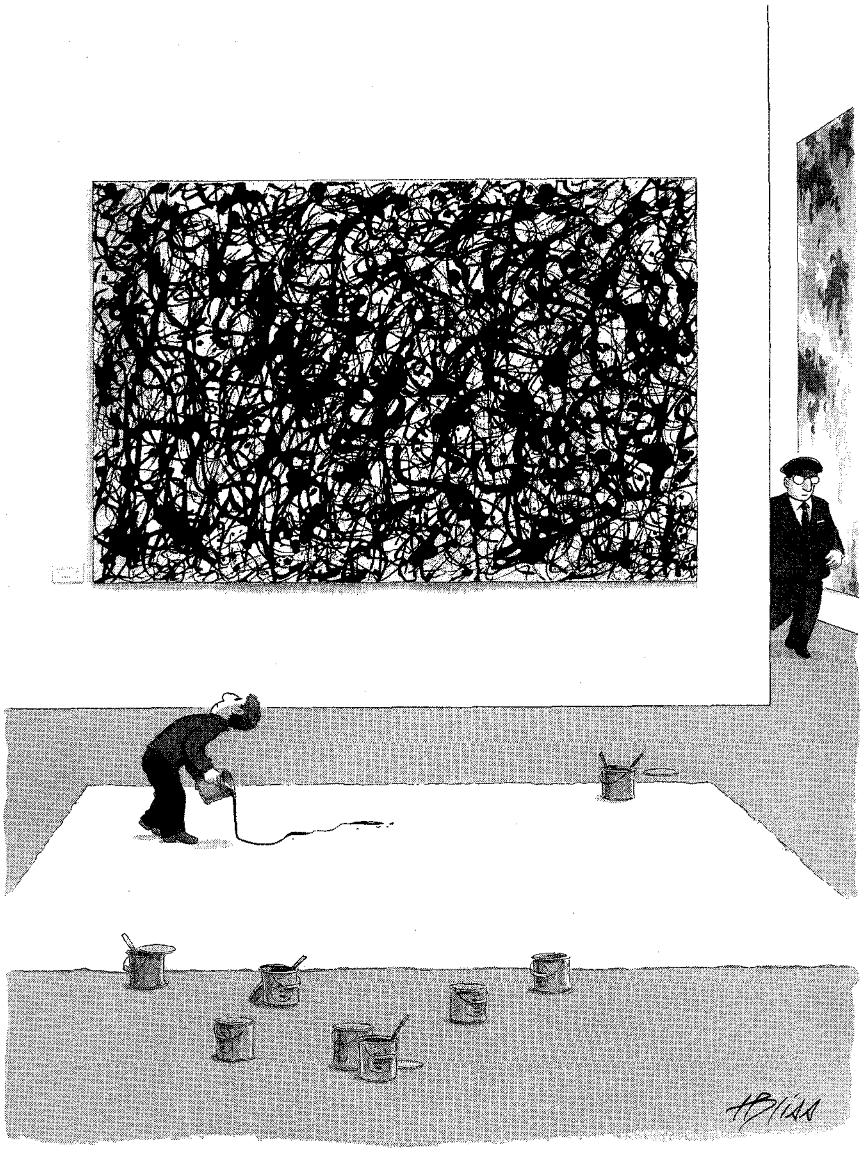
"The sun rises on the Upper East Side and sets on the Upper West Side."

BACKSEAT

Richard Bruce Cheney was born in 1941 in Nebraska, the descendant of high-plains homesteaders out of a Willa Cather novel. One grandfather was a cook on the Union Pacific railroad, the other a cashier in a bank that went under during the Depression. His father, who supposedly made Cheney look like Kathie Lee Gifford in the volubility department, was a federal bureaucrat—decades with the Soil Conservation Service, winding up as a GS-13—and both parents were loyal Democrats, proud to say that their son Dick had been born on Franklin Roosevelt's birthday. When Cheney was thirteen years old, his father was transferred from Lincoln, Nebraska, to Casper, Wyoming.

Casper back then, at least as described by Cheney and his high-school friends, was an exact version of the idea we have of America in the fifties. It was a rural town where everybody knew everybody else, where doors were never locked, where people liked Ike and loved cars. People weren't especially concerned with politics, and, if they were, they weren't especially ideological—it wasn't the hard-conservative West of today. The Natrona County High School yearbook from Cheney's senior year lists the winners of the Homemaker of Tomorrow Award, sponsored by Betty Crocker, and the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen award. All the boys had to serve in R.O.T.C., and all the girls wore uniforms. Lynne Vincent, soon to become Lynne Cheney, was the obvious star of the school (and perhaps the first powerful person with whom Dick Cheney formed a bond): she was a state-champion baton twirler, specializing in flaming equipment, and won the high school's most glorious position, Mustang Queen; Dick promoted her campaign. She, too, was the daughter of a Democratic civil servant (GS-13, Bureau of Reclamation). Cheney's younger brother, Bob, is a civil servant, too, now retired from the Bureau of Land Management.

One atypical point about Casper was that it was an oil town. It attracted people who wanted to make a lot of money; some were scions of respectable Eastern families who had an adventurous streak. In that sense, Casper was like Midland, Texas, where George W. Bush grew up in a small colony of preppie expats. The Casper version of George H. W. Bush was a man named Thomas Stroock, whose great-great-uncle helped found the venerable New York law firm of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan and who operated an independent oil company called Alpha Exploration. In fact, Tom Stroock was (and still is) a friend of George Bush's—they were both Yale '48—and, like Bush, spent his spare time on Republican politics.



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Lynne Vincent, as a high-school student, got a part-time secretarial job in Stroock's office. She introduced him to her boyfriend, Dick Cheney, who played halfback and outside linebacker and was senior-class president at Natrona County High, and Stroock liked the cut of Cheney's jib. "In those days, you could do things you can't do now," Stroock told me, "so I called Yale and told 'em to take this guy," along with Natrona County High's all-state quarterback from the class of '59, Tom Fake. Yale offered Cheney and Fake full scholarships; in the yearbook there is a picture of the two Stroock-anointed boys, crew-cut and grinning, with a caption that says, "Ivy League bound Tom Fake and Dick Cheney show their happiness upon receiving notice of their acceptance by Yale University."

This personnel system, halfway between modern meritocracy and a Horatio Alger novel in which plucky lads get started by caddying for the wealthy, was also responsible for sending that year's student-body president, Dave Nicholas, to Harvard, through the patronage of another émigré alumnus. Both Cheney and Fake flunked out. (Nicholas finally graduated from Harvard in 1967.) In Cheney's case, he decided after three semesters that he should take some time off. He spent a year and a half working as a power lineman and saving up money, returned to Yale, and left again because of poor grades, this time for good, after another semester. What happened? I asked Dave Nicholas, now a lawyer in Laramie, Wyoming, and he said, "I can only extrapolate. They were smart enough, but they hadn't been prepped like the guys from the academies. Going from where we were, that solid, pragmatic background, to the less concrete, more abstract, more theoretical—we needed the bread and butter first. And the social milieu, which I liked, was like 'Animal House,' and when I went to Yale to visit those guys it was like that. It wasn't what you'd expect. It wasn't the most rigorous learning environment." The Casper boys, all of whom had grown up without want, suddenly found themselves in an unfamiliar world of ease, wealth, and connections, in which your mistakes might be forgiven if you had been born into it but not if you hadn't. That's a lesson that sticks with you.

During my interview with Cheney, I asked him how he had gone from flunking out of Yale to becoming, as he did within a few years, the epitome of a super-responsible young man. "Hmm. Well, I'm sure for my family it didn't seem like it happened all that fast," he said, cracking his crooked smile. "No, I got out of high school. I hadn't really given that much thought to what I was going to do. I was recruited to go to Yale." He mentioned the Thomas Stroock connection. "I did it primarily because he invited me to do it. I was admitted, and given a full-ride financial package, 'cause my family couldn't afford to send me to Yale. I spent a total of four semesters there, but I was not a diligent student. Really wasn't. Hadn't given it any thought. Wasn't gonna go to college and buckle down. Big transition going from small-town Wyoming to New Haven, Connecticut."

As Cheney got into the story, his language drifted into that terse John Wayne rhythm. "And by the summer of 1963 I was working in Rock Springs, Wyoming, building a power line from there down to Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Wyoming-Utah border. For six years, from the summer I got out of high school, 1959, to the year after Lynne and I got married, when I wasn't in school, I was working on the power lines. Carried a ticket in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers." He continued, "When I should have been graduating from Yale, one of the world's finer universities, with a first-rate education, all paid for by the university, I found myself in Rock Springs"—Wyoming's blue-collar, union, Democratic town—"working, building power lines, having been in a couple of scrapes with the law. Arrested twice within a year for driving under the influence, once in Cheyenne, once in Rock Springs. And it was a sobering"—Cheney chuckled. "I'm not sure that's the right word. Sobering moment. Sit down and think about where I was and where I was headed. I was headed down a bad road, if I continued on that course.

"I made a decision to move out of Rock Springs. Moved in with an old journeyman lineman who'd been badly wounded in World War Two. He was drawing disability. He wasn't able to climb anymore, but he ran a big D9 Cat. He was a powder monkey. Didn't like people. Had a mean, nasty dog that didn't like people. But we got along. We'd literally camp out down on the job, a week at a time. So I moved in with him for the summer.

"And then decided to reënroll in college that fall, down at the University of Wyoming. And Wyoming had to take me because I was a graduate of a Wyoming high school. I could afford it because the tuition was about ninety-six bucks a semester. I had an apartment that I shared with Joe Meyer. Joe's now the Secretary of State of Wyoming, getting ready to run for governor. We shared an apartment that cost us twenty-two fifty a month apiece. One-bedroom apartment. Applied myself, worked hard, and shortly thereafter was making straight A's. Turned out I was a pretty good student when I worked at it. And a year later Lynne and I got married. I must say I've got to give her a good deal of the credit for being a positive influence in my life. Stuck by me all those years. We'd gone to high school together and dated throughout this whole period of time. And she made it clear she wasn't interested in marrying a lineman for the county. That was really when I went

CHERRY BLOSSOMS BLOWING IN WET, BLOWING SNOW

In all the farewells in all the airports in all the profane dawns.

In the Fiat with no documents on the road to Madrid.
At the
corrida.
In the Lope de Vega, the Analena, the Jerome.
In time
past, time lost, time yet to pass.
In poetry.
In watery deserts, on
arid seas, between deserts and seas.
In sickness and in health.
In
pain and in the celebration of pain.
In the delivery room.
In the
garden.
In the hammock under the aspen.
In all the emergencies.
In
the waterfall.
In toleration.
In retaliation.
In rhyme.
Among cherry
blossoms blowing in wet, blowing snow, weren't we something?

—*James Galvin*

back to school in Laramie. I buckled down and applied myself. Decided it was time to make something of myself."

It was just after this juncture, when he was deciding to put his wild streak away, that Cheney entered politics. He got a part-time job as an intern at the legislature in Laramie. At the time, the Wyoming legislature had only two internships, one in the House and one in the Senate. The other intern hired for the 1965 term was an active member of Young Democrats, and since the House was Democratic Cheney was sent to the Senate, which was Republican. From 1965 on, both Cheneys were, professionally, Republicans. "Dick Cheney. Curious, lookin'-around guy," says Alan Simpson, the former senator from Wyoming, who was in the legislature then, and is ten years older than Cheney. "All the interns were bright, but this one kid from Casper was especially curious and diligent. Especially curious." Cheney began acquiring patrons, who saw him as an unusually quiet, hardworking, and forthright young man, a technician whose only evident concern was with efficiently carrying out whatever task was assigned to him.

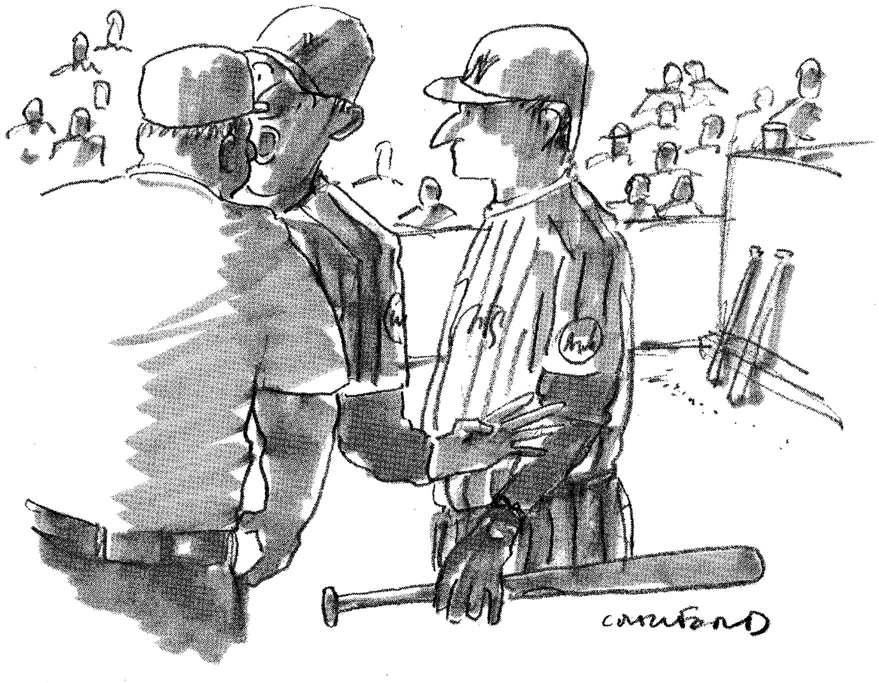
Tom Stroock was a state senator at the time. Dick Tobin, the chairman of the Wyoming Senate Judiciary Committee, also took a particular interest in Cheney. So did John Thompson, the chairman of the political-science department at the University of Wyoming. Cheney wrote a paper that won a national contest for student political scientists and that came to the attention of Maureen Drummy, chief aide to an up-and-coming Republican congressman from Wisconsin, Bill Steiger. In 1966, through that new connection, Cheney got a job as an aide to Wisconsin's Republican governor, Warren Knowles. Both Cheneys enrolled in graduate school, on scholarship, at the University of Wisconsin, Dick in political science, Lynne in English.

Dick Cheney picked an especially unglamorous subspecialty, computerized regression analyses of congressional voting records. He so impressed the elders of the Wisconsin political-science department that, as soon as he was finished with his graduate coursework and had only his Ph.D. dissertation left to do, he was made an American Political Science Association fellow, which meant going to Washington for a year to work in a government office. In 1968, Cheney went to work for Bill Steiger.

Around this point in the story, Cheney coughed. " 'Scuse me," he said. "Need a glass of water here. Talkin' too much." He walked across the room, poured a glass from a pitcher, drank, returned to his chair, and described what had tipped the balance, in his mind, from political science to politics: He had been working on the Hill, with a group of congressmen—among them Steiger and George H. W. Bush—who were considering legislation to cut off federal funding to campuses where there had been violent antiwar protests. "We picked campuses all across the country and went quietly on the campus to find out what was really going on. We went back to Wisconsin, and I took them to a rally that the S.D.S., Students for a Democratic Society—you probably remember all those groups, you're not that much younger than I am—held. . . . We were the only guys in the hall wearing suits that night. The campus of the University of Wisconsin then was just wild.

"I found out there was a meeting of senior faculty members on the campus every Thursday afternoon. These were the people who gave the university its intellectual greatness. And we were invited to attend this meeting. Not to participate—we couldn't speak—but, if we wanted to sit and listen, that would be O.K. I was always struck, because what happened in this meeting was a lot of complaints about the administration, the management of the university, oftentimes about the students—sort of critical of everybody out there, because the place was chaotic at that time. There were days when the National Guard was out with its tear gas trying to control the protesters. These folks were unhappy with what was happening, but in all the time I'd been in Wisconsin not one of these folks had ever stood up and been counted on either side of the debate. They were totally disengaged. . . . When I was given a choice between returning to academia or staying in the political arena, it really wasn't a close call."

Soon Cheney got—or, to be more accurate, made for himself—the most important break of his career. President Nixon had appointed Donald Rumsfeld, then a young congressman from a district not far from Steiger's, to the position of director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the agency charged with carrying out Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. Cheney took it upon himself to write a long memo on how Rumsfeld should handle his confirmation hearings and then the job itself. He showed the memo to Steiger, Steiger passed it on to



"You can't talk to him like that, Herman! He makes your salary every time he trots lethargically to his position in right field."

Rumsfeld, and, as had happened with Cheney's Wyoming paper, his writing got him a job. Rumsfeld hired Cheney as an aide, which effectively meant the end of Cheney's career as a political scientist. Of all Cheney's patrons, Rumsfeld is probably the one who has helped him the most.

The O.E.O., from the Republican point of view, was a hardship post. Nixon hated the agency, which had become the point of interaction between the federal government and the sixties—the agency most likely to attract demonstrations and occupations. Rumsfeld was supposed to calm things down—in particular, to put an end to political protesting, on the government's nickel, by recipients of O.E.O. grants. Working at the O.E.O., however, was not bad for one's career in the Republican Party. It was a way of being involved in one of the great controversies of the day—America's most famous promising young person at that moment, Bill Bradley, worked there—and, for Republicans, it offered a chance to demonstrate the ability to perform a distasteful assignment. You could win battle stars. The small Nixon O.E.O. staff employed four future Republican Cabinet officers: Rumsfeld, Cheney, Frank Carlucci, and Christine Todd Whitman.

Rumsfeld was swaggering and superambitious, an ex-fighter pilot who would greet subordinates visiting his office with lines like "You've got thirty seconds!" and would relentlessly needle the people working for him. ("Speak up, Dick! Don't talk into your sleeve!" he'd say to the very green Cheney, when he'd go into his Western mumble in staff meetings.) Cheney was just as intense as Rumsfeld, though much more concealed—the process guy who hardly ever said anything and had, as far as the people working with him could tell, no opinions of his own. The word "bland" came up in descriptions of him. He was a political scientist, he knew how government worked. He smoked heavily, drove an ancient Volkswagen Beetle, and lived in a small suburban town house with Lynne and their two young daughters.

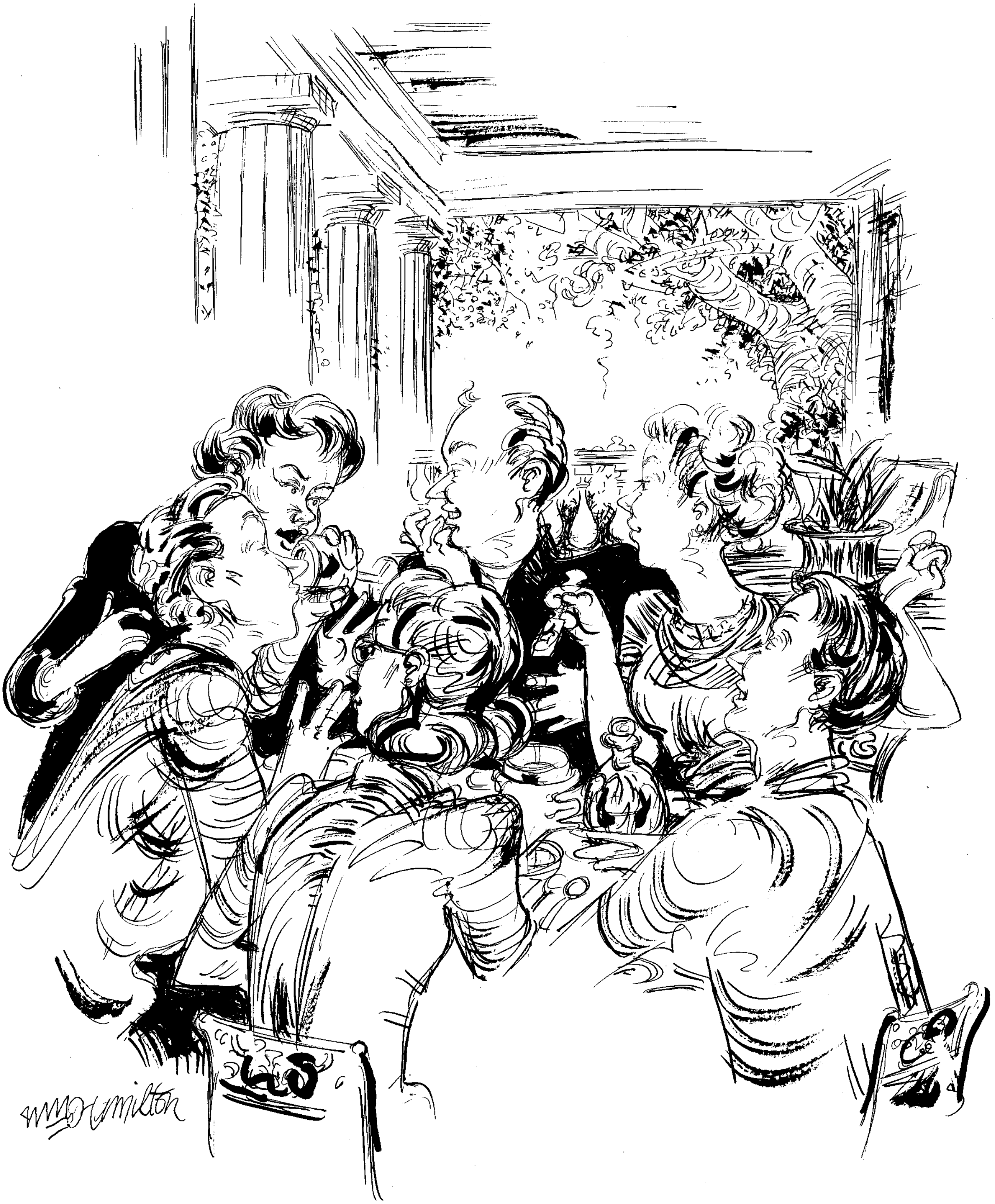
Rumsfeld kept getting promoted, and kept bringing Cheney along as his No. 2 man. Their next assignment was running the Cost of Living Council, the wage-price-control operation Nixon had put into place in 1971 to try to combat an alarming wave of inflation. From the Rumsfeld-Cheney point of view, this was the O.E.O. story all over again: a chance to carry out an impossible task creditably, without creating problems for the Administration. Rumsfeld was rewarded with the United States ambassadorship to NATO. Cheney spent this period briefly outside government, working for a firm that provided strategic advice to businesses. Then Nixon resigned, Gerald Ford asked Rumsfeld to come back temporarily and organize his transition, and very quickly Rumsfeld's temporary assignment became a permanent appointment, as White House chief of staff. Cheney reprised his role as Rumsfeld's deputy.

Ford was surrounded by a diverse group: a few comfortable-old-shoe aides from his long years as a Michigan congressman; a rich, powerful bull of a Vice-President, Nelson Rockefeller; formidable executives like William Colby, at the C.I.A., James Schlesinger, at the Pentagon, and Henry Kissinger, at the State Department; and the youngsters, Rumsfeld and Cheney, who turned out to be brutally effective office politicians. Before long, the veteran aides had mostly been relegated to secondary positions. Rockefeller had been stripped of his position as head of the White House Domestic Council and dropped from the 1976 ticket, becoming a bitter figurehead Vice-President. (A funny and mean caricature of Rockefeller in this period can be found in the 1988 novel "The Body Politic," by Lynne Cheney and Victor Gold.) Kissinger, who had managed to acquire the positions of Secretary of State and national-security adviser simultaneously, had the N.S.C. taken away from him. Schlesinger and Colby were fired. Rumsfeld, on the other hand, was promoted to Secretary of Defense, the youngest ever, at age forty-three, and Cheney was promoted to chief of staff on his recommendation.

Rumsfeld's rise had earned him a reputation as a schemer. There was speculation that he wanted to be Ford's running mate in 1976, and later to run for President—hence the relentless undermining of Rockefeller. Rumsfeld also, as the speculation had it, had cleverly arranged for one of his potential rivals, George Bush, to succeed Colby as head of the C.I.A., a job that required its occupant to stand apart from politics. Cheney had a quite different reputation—the Secret Service's code name for him was Backseat. In his memoirs, Ford writes, "Cheney was very low-key, Rumsfeld rather intense. . . . Both were pragmatic 'problem-solvers'; both worked eighteen-hour days and were absolutely loyal to me."

In Cheney's papers at the Gerald Ford library, you can pick up little clues that Cheney was more than just an innocent academic, but, because of the silken skill with which he operates, they're subtle. Rumsfeld, who prides himself on his management ability, had a rule that everybody in the White House had to have a deputy who was fully capable of doing his job. His deputy was Cheney. When Cheney got the chief of staff's job, he did not appoint a deputy, and he added to the power of the chief of staff's office. After a series of demotions, the leader of the old Ford aides, a former newspaperman named Bob Hartmann, was left only with his job as chief White House speechwriter. Cheney made Hartmann irrelevant by hiring someone else, David Gergen, to do his job. (Hartmann got even in his memoirs by writing, "Cheney was a presentable young man who could easily be lost in a gaggle of Jaycee executives. His most distinguishing features were snake-cold eyes, like a Cheyenne gambler's. . . . He was tough, tireless, book-smart, with a touch of sarcasm occasionally overcoming studied subordination.") In Cheney's papers, there is a draft of a letter from Ford to Rockefeller thanking him for giving up the chairmanship of the domestic council (translation: you're fired, and now I'm putting it in writing), with a cover note from Cheney to his secretary saying, "Hang onto it right here in the Office. I may need it at some future point." President Ford's idea of Cheney as "low-key" says more about the way Cheney presented himself than about what he was really like.

Press coverage of Cheney usually made two points about him: he had no political ambition, and his views were indistinguishable from President Ford's. It surely was fine with Cheney to be perceived that way, but it is also true that one of his qualities is an absolute loyalty to authority generally and to his patron in particular. Still, after Ford lost to Jimmy



“Do you guys know how lucky you are to have a big house that’s not too big?”

Carter, Cheney moved back to Wyoming and demonstrated that he actually did have political ambition by winning its only congressional seat. He could have parlayed the chief-of-staff job into a profitable career as a lobbyist in Washington, perhaps returning to government jobs periodically. Instead, he chose the stressful life of a junior congressman with a distant, spread-out constituency. He had his first heart attack, at age thirty-seven, during his campaign.

Cheney took office in 1979, beginning what turned out to be a ten-year career in the House. He quickly acquired a new patron in Bob Michel, the genial congressman from Peoria, Illinois, who led the House Republicans during the period when it seemed they were consigned to perpetual minority status. Most of the leading young Republicans in the House, like Newt Gingrich, Jack Kemp, and Trent Lott, were flashily conservative, and pushed Michel to make more use of the new techniques of politics, focus groups, polls, and dramatic ideas hatched in think tanks. But Cheney, in his relations with Michel, just hooked up his reassurance I.V. "With Cheney you never had a sense that he was taking you over the cliff," Michel told me recently. "Going so far you couldn't come back. He's got a nice way of presenting conservatism to the people, without sarcastic, demeaning words." By the late eighties, Dick Cheney was the Republican whip, No. 2 in the leadership, and Bob Michel's anointed successor.

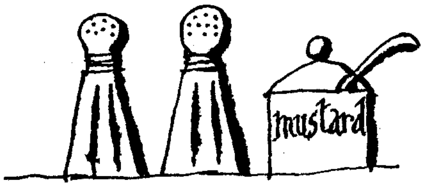
One of Cheney's high-school friends told me that he had a conversation during these years with him, in which he said, " 'Dick, what would possess someone to spend his life on airplanes? What is it?' Dick said, 'I can't explain it. It's just being there where things happen, and making things happen. I enjoy it.' " That, for Cheney, even with a lifelong friend, is about as self-revelatory as he ever gets.

In Republican Washington these days, one calls George H. W. Bush Forty-one and George W. Bush Forty-three. In 1989, when Forty-one took office, he was unable to win confirmation for his nominee as Secretary of Defense, the tiny and imperious Senator John Tower, of Texas. By the time Bush finally gave up, his overriding concern was with finding a replacement who was certain to be confirmed quickly. Brent Scowcroft, Bush's national-security adviser and an old Ford Administration guy, suggested Cheney.

Cheney was absolutely, always, the President's man in the Pentagon. Just as he was taking office, the Air Force chief of staff, General Larry Welch, was, after having consulted with the Administration's top defense officials, talking to members of Congress about possible changes in the intercontinental-ballistic-missile program. At his first press conference, Cheney announced that Welch "was not speaking for the department." This was humiliating to Welch, and also unfair, but it demonstrated that Cheney was in charge and protecting the President's total authority on missile policy.

Cheney used to joke that as a congressman he never met a weapons system he didn't like. As Secretary of Defense, though, his mission was to get the President a peace dividend, and he ordered the cancellation of two big weapons systems, to the displeasure of the services sponsoring them. As the Gulf War was approaching, he was out in front of Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, in pushing for the commitment of American forces to the Gulf, which was Bush's position. In "The Commanders," Bob Woodward quotes Cheney observing, in a rare unguarded moment, that Bush "has got a long history of vindictive political actions" and that one had "to be careful" around him. Cheney heeded his own advice very well.

He was also unusually thorough. Sometimes, on Saturday mornings, he would hold meetings at which academic experts on a subject related to his job—nuclear strategy, say, or the future of the Soviet Union—would come to the Pentagon and brief him for hours. It's rare for Cabinet secretaries to take as serious an interest as Cheney did in mastering the substance of the work of their departments or to think past the immediate term; Colin Powell was invited to some of these meetings and would wander in and out. Cheney had his policy staff set up a secret unit that worked up a report for him on what the potential collapse of the Soviet Union would mean to the national defense. And during the Gulf War he seemed to people who visited him to know the exact location and mission of practically every platoon in the force. Cheney's attention to detail won him a measure of respect from the services, despite his having avoided military service as a young man (even as an unmarried power lineman, he got a draft deferral by enrolling at a community college in Casper and saying he was a student), and despite his having twice fired high-ranking generals without going through the established channels.



During Cheney's career, the Republican Party became more rhetorically opposed to the idea of government. Cheney, the civil servant's son, never espoused that notion—he did not make scornful references to "bureaucrats"—and his party's hostility to government, rather than marginalizing him, only made him more valuable. When Republicans win, no matter how negative their attitude toward the government, they still have to run it; Cheney, who has worked at the highest level in the White House, in Congress, and in federal agencies, and knows how to get just about anything in Washington done, is a valuable resource for a party whose talent pool is thin on people who have mastered Washington operations. "He loves—loves—government," Alan Simpson says. "Policy. Administration. Big-time administrator. Big-time make-things-work guy." Just as important as his efficiency is his discretion: over and over I heard from his friends, fiercely, proudly, "Dick Cheney will never write a book!" meaning one of those books where you reveal, in a way that makes your own heroism clear, what really went on in the inner councils of government. His older daughter, Liz Cheney Perry, a thirty-four-year-old Washington lawyer who is informally a close adviser to her father, told me, "If you're working for him, he makes it clear what he wants. If you screw up, he makes it clear. If you don't fix it, he fires you. He's not afraid to fire people. That also makes him useful to people for whom he's working." To the extent that the Republican Party is like a big corporation, Cheney had worked his way up steadily over thirty years from a clerk's job to the top of the executive suite.

"What rhymes with 'failed marriage'?"

One can easily imagine the realization dawning upon George W. Bush last spring and summer that Cheney was the guy he needed by his side in the White House. Cheney had Texas credentials—he was living in Dallas at the time as head of the Halliburton Company—he had Forty-one's strong endorsement, he knew the federal government backward and forward as Bush did not, he would never upstage his President. The relatively brief successful portion of Forty-three's career—the Texas Rangers baseball team, the Texas governorship—had been marked by his finding phlegmatic veterans to run things for him while he worked his charm on the public. The brief portion of Cheney's career outside government, when he was head of Halliburton, was marked by his talent at working government contacts and his mastery of the art of strategic deferentiality. His No. 1 achievement at Halliburton was engineering a merger with its rival, Dresser Industries (a company where Prescott Bush was a board member for decades, and where George H.W. Bush had his first job), which he did partly by offering the boss at Dresser, William E. Bradford, the title of chairman of the board, while arranging matters so that the company would be firmly under his own control. Cheney and Bush were meant for each other.

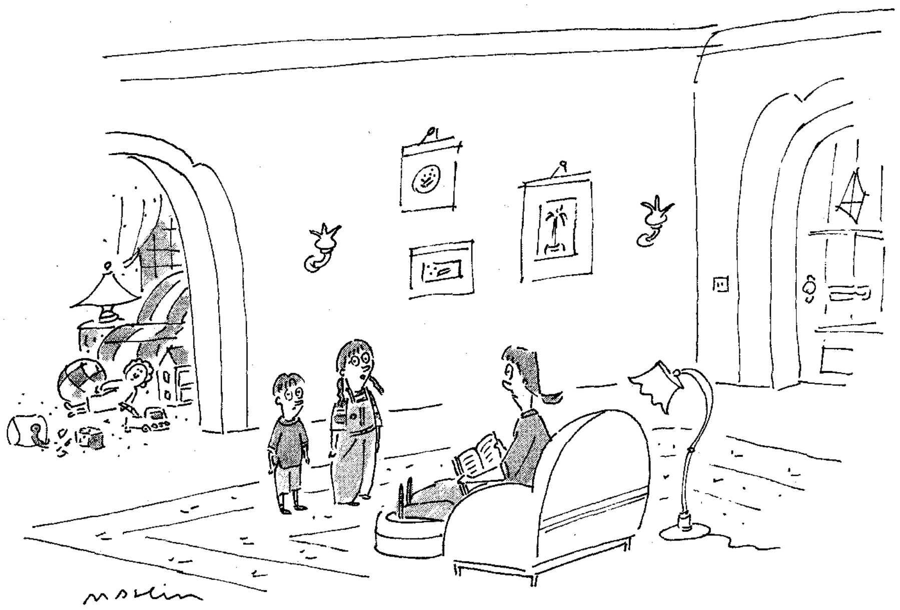
THE FIRE WITHIN

Over the first weekend in February, stories came out in the national press—the *Times* and the Washington *Post* on Saturday, *Time* on Monday—about Dick Cheney's emerging role as Vice-President. All of them made the point that Cheney has no ambition to become President. All he wants is to serve George W. Bush.

While professed lack of political ambition may be a standard item in Cheney's repertoire, the real message of these stories seemed to be that Forty-three is a President who particularly needs to be assured that the people who work for him are unwaveringly loyal and selfless. It certainly isn't as if the thought of being President had never crossed Cheney's mind. He spent most of 1993 and 1994 engaging, with his usual thoroughness, in a kind of pre-campaign for President, aimed at making him the Republican nominee in 1996. He did all the things you do: he set up a political-action committee, he raised money, he made speeches for Republican politicians, he visited forty-seven states. Then, in January of 1995, he announced he wouldn't be running. Halliburton was the highly remunerative consolation prize.

People who decide not to run for President usually say they didn't want to put their family through the hell of a national campaign. Cheney had a specific twist on this argument, which was that it was not yet known that his younger daughter, Mary, is a lesbian. But I also heard other theories. One was that Cheney, with his reverence for authority, couldn't bear the thought of openly challenging Bob Dole, his party's war-hero elder statesman, for the nomination. Another was that he couldn't raise enough money, because he comes from too small a state. The theory I found most persuasive was that Cheney is not a performer, and could not go before the public with a dramatic account of himself, a story that would appeal to ordinary people. (Bush, who has much less in common with ordinary people than Cheney does, could do that.) "When have we elected the best?" Cheney bitterly remarked to Bob Woodward, after dropping out.

Does that thought still rattle around in Cheney's mind? Even if it does, his recompense is that he is about as close to being President as it is possible to get without actually holding the office. He has gone far past the boundary of influence of any previous Vice-President in American history. It used to be that the sine qua non of Vice-Presidential power was a weekly private lunch with the President. Cheney has that, but for him it's almost an afterthought. He meets with the President early every morning and then several more times during a typical day. Cheney and Bush together, sitting in that pair of world-leaders-chatting wing chairs in the Oval Office, jointly preside over meetings with the White House domestic-policy and economic-policy staffs. If there is a meeting on any sensitive international matter in the Situation Room, Cheney attends. Cheney meets once a week with his old Pentagon colleague Colin Powell, now Secretary of State, and once a week with his old mentor Donald Rumsfeld,



"We're tired of playing. We want to work."

now Secretary of Defense; has a weekly lunch with Powell, Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice, the national-security adviser; and sits on what is known as the Principals' Committee, a group of top foreign-policy and defense officials in the government.

Cheney holds the deciding vote in the half-Democratic, half-Republican United States Senate. In addition to two offices in the White House complex, he maintains the traditional Vice-President's office in the Senate. He usually attends the weekly Republican Senate policy lunch. He is also the first Vice-President in history to have an office in the House of Representatives—just off the floor, for lobbying—and he meets with the House Republican Conference, too. One Republican senator I interviewed told me that President Bush had told him repeatedly, "When you're talking to Dick Cheney, you're talking to me. When Dick Cheney's talking, it's me talking."

Vice-Presidents are known for attending the funerals of foreign dignitaries. Cheney meets with foreign dignitaries when they come to the White House. The British Prime Minister Tony Blair, for example, met with Cheney for an hour before meeting with President Bush. Vice-Presidents are often given special assignments, which have usually been second-order-of-magnitude projects like Al Gore's "Reinventing Government." Cheney's special assignments are the central missions of the Administration. He first ran the transition, then the task force on energy policy. When John McCain came to the White House in January to talk with Bush on campaign finance, he found himself meeting instead with Bush and Cheney. When Bush decided to renege on his campaign pledge to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions in order to fight global warming, "Administration officials" told the *Times* that Cheney had encouraged it. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in February that four governors of Western states, who were visiting the White House and concerned about energy policy, had attended a public event hosted by the President, then gone to see Cheney to talk business.

Cheney has put a strong imprint on the staffing of the Bush Administration. Rumsfeld, obviously, is a Cheney guy. So is the Secretary of the Treasury, Paul O'Neill, who worked in the Office of Management and Budget during the Ford Administration. Alan Greenspan is a friend of Cheney's—he, too, worked in the Ford Administration, as head of the Council of Economic Advisors. Deputies, as Cheney surely knows, can be the most important people in government. The deputy head of the Office of Management and Budget, Sean O'Keefe; the deputy head of the National Security Council, Stephen Hadley; and the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, are all veterans of Cheney's team at the Pentagon. Hadley chairs the Deputies' Committee, another dull-sounding but important regularly meeting group of defense and foreign-policy officials.

What's interesting about Cheney's career is that you can play it through from the beginning and see the rise of a steady, efficient, neutral government executive; or you can rewind, play it again with a little less willingness to accept everything at face value, and see him as having been a much more ideologically conservative figure all along, only quiet about it. If Cheney is in fact a man who has strong views about the direction in which government should move, then his unusual current role (Prime minister? Chief operating officer? Head of government to Bush's head of state?) would offer him, finally, a chance to put them into effect.

Last summer, after Bush had selected Cheney and the scrutiny began, there was a lot of surprise over how conservative his voting record in Congress had been. He had voted against funding the Head Start program, against sanctions targeting apartheid in South Africa, against gun control, against the Equal Rights Amendment. His voting record over the years got higher ratings from the American Conservative Union than Newt Gingrich's.

Even so, even people who know Cheney well insist that a man with his manner can't possibly be a red-meat conservative. "It was just the line that a congressman from Wyoming would follow," Bob Michel said. Alan Simpson said, "He really is a moderate, but his voting record is conservative, so he could go both ways. He's not a 'get mad, get even' guy. Those people have B.O. and gas and heartburn and smell bad—that's not Dick." Brent Scowcroft said, "He's not a far-out idea man, as Paul Wolfowitz can be, for example. He's conventional and cautious." These attitudes are testament to how well contained Cheney is. "You're never gonna get in Dick Cheney's head," Alan Simpson said. "Give it up! He's not gonna talk about his philosophy of life. Forget it!"

Lynne Cheney has a much more developed conservative reputation than her husband, because she has published and opined on television much more than he has and because, in the eighties, she turned in a combative performance as head of the National Endowment for the Humanities. When I interviewed her not long ago, though, in her office in the White House complex, she showed that she can also come across as a charming, polished, not especially ideological political wife. A strikingly small woman, she sat in an enormous-looking chair, her hands neatly folded in her lap, her legs crossed at the ankles, her knees swivelled to the side—a tea-party pose. Both Cheneys have had a lot of practice over the years at making appearances in which the object is simply to generate confidence and good will, not to prosecute the battle. Career Republicans, and career Democrats, too, spend most of their time among their own kind. At one point in our conversation, I asked Mrs. Cheney how she thought President Clinton would be remembered. She looked a little surprised. "I don't have a clue!" she said, pleasantly and forthrightly. "I think I'm too close to it."

Like so many others, Lynne Cheney said she was not fully versed on Dick Cheney's political views, but she did say, as his friends did, too, that he is a big reader of history, especially military history. His heroes, she said, were Churchill—"Before I even knew Winston Churchill was a writer, Dick had read his way through most of Churchill"—and, especially, George C. Marshall, the wise, silent commanding general in the Second World War and, later, Secretary of State. She fished out of her purse a list she had scribbled on a piece of paper of the books that were stacked on the Vice-President's bedside table that morning: two on the Civil War, one on the Revolutionary War, one on the Founders, one on Grant, one edited by Churchill.

You can imagine how one of the popular historians Cheney likes to read would treat his situation now. He has had a long ride from obscurity to the top of American politics and government. He is consummately expert and experienced, and, because of a peculiar, unexpected set of circumstances involving a father-son Presidential team, he has a great deal of power at a moment when the United States might have more influence than any nation has ever had. At the same time, he is seriously ill: three heart attacks before getting the Vice-Presidential nomination, two hospitalizations involving chest pain just in the last few months—one a fourth heart attack, the other trouble stemming from a prosthetic device which, according to his own rather optimistic doctor, has a forty-per-cent chance of recurrence. Surely the true dramatic lesson arising from Cheney's poor health would be not that he has mellowly set aside ambition but that he has a special sense of urgency and shortness of time about accomplishing the things he is finally in a position to get done. The question is what those would be.

Liz Cheney Perry told me that her father has said to her that a formative experience for him was taking a survey course on post-Second World War American diplomacy, during his time at Yale, from a professor named Bradford Westerfield. At about the time Cheney would have taken the course, Westerfield published a book called "The Instruments of America's Foreign Policy." It begins this way: "BETTER RED THAN DEAD." And it continues, "Ominously, the infectious defeatism drifts across the Atlantic and begins to insinuate itself into the mind of America." Westerfield goes on to worry about the possibility of a Communist takeover of the United States, because of our innocent, overconfident optimism. After having awakened, too late, to the dangers of the Cold War, "more and more Americans might conclude in panic that resistance was hopeless, and that it would be better to submit and be swept along with the new wave of the future."

Westerfield most likely struck a chord in Cheney, rather than having implanted a new thought; the idea of the United States's being in peril and of very tough measures being required to protect it runs deeply and consistently in Cheney's thinking, when you piece together the available evidence about what his thinking is. Cheney was always particularly suspicious of the Soviet Union. During the Ford Administration, one of the rare times when Cheney put a position on an issue in writing was in arguing that Ford should invite the recently expatriated Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn to the White House, something Henry Kissinger strongly opposed because he thought it would disrupt the policy of détente that he was promoting (and of which

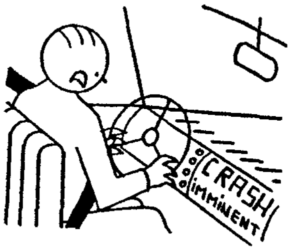
"I'll wait a moment for everyone's energy drink to kick in."

Cheney was deeply skeptical). In the first Bush Administration, Cheney was known for his skepticism on whether Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of perestroika could succeed. Brent Scowcroft's National Security Council was known as the home of the Gorbachevites in the Administration, and Cheney's Pentagon as the home of the Yeltsinites. After Boris Yeltsin was elected President of Russia but while Gorbachev was still head of the Soviet Union, Cheney invited Yeltsin to the Pentagon and arranged to have him greeted with a full-dress military welcome. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Cheney advocated remaining suspicious of it.

Forceful covert action taken to forestall the Soviet threat, or any threat to the United States, has traditionally got Cheney's strong support. In the House, he served on the intelligence committee and strongly supported aiding the Contras in Nicaragua. When the Iran-Contra scandal broke, he became the leading defender of the Reagan Administration's funding of the Contras in violation of a congressional vote. He served on the special Iran-Contra investigating committee and supervised the vigorous defense of Presidential authority that the committee's Republicans issued; his instinct seems to lead him first to the tough, legal-niceties-be-damned alternative. "That's what intelligence is," says Porter Goss, a Republican congressman from Florida who is a former C.I.A. officer and a congressional colleague of Cheney's. "It's finding out what the people in the gutter and the sewer are doing. You need to take risks. We need leadership. Cheney is certainly the man who can provide it. He understands risk. He understands bold leadership. He understands purpose."

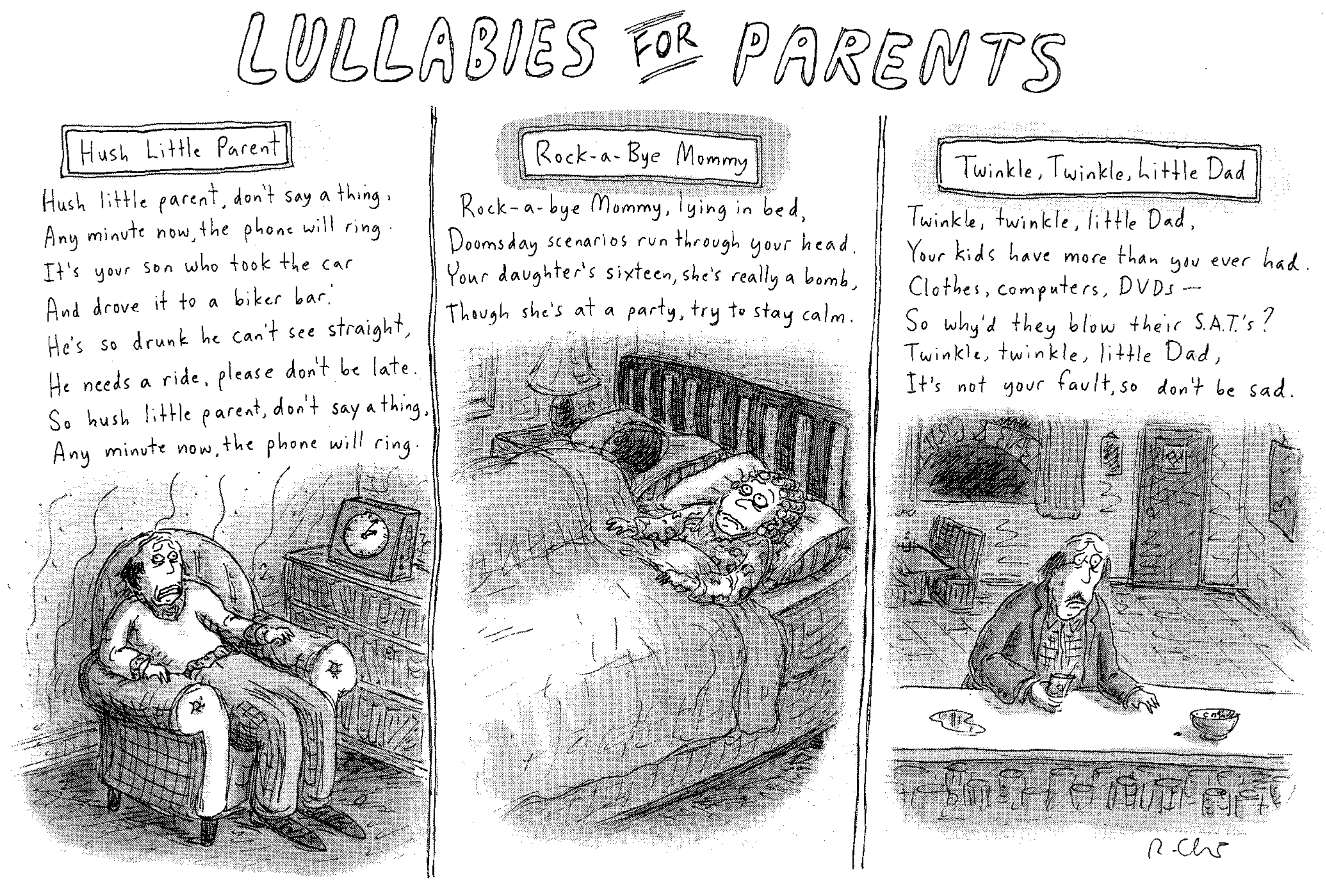
The administrative idea that embodies these views is a strong belief in Presidential power. Cheney thought Reagan, as a matter of right, should have been able to support the Contras without having to clear it with Congress. During the run-up to the Gulf War, he urged George Bush not to wait for a congressional resolution of approval. One of his few published works is an essay called "Congressional Overreaching in Foreign Policy," and perhaps his only public display of emotion came after Jim Wright, the Democratic House Speaker in the mid-eighties, had used legislative trickery to try to thwart a resolution of support for the Contras. Cheney, in an interview with a reporter for *The National Journal,* called Wright "a heavy-handed son of a bitch." Now that he is in the White House, if his record is any indication, Cheney would be an advocate of a strong, free Presidential hand in military and intelligence matters.

Although foreign policy is Cheney's passion, he is generally interested, much more than most people at his level in government, in the idea side of politics, and he is consistently attracted to conservative ideas. (At times, Cheney makes an exception for wilderness protection; as a congressman, he helped write a wilderness bill for Wyoming, and one of his rare defeats thus far in the new Administration appears to have been failing to get a high position in the Interior Department for an old friend from Wyoming, John Turner, who is the head of the Conservation Fund, because the anti-environmentalist right considered Turner too green and lobbied against him.) Cheney's papers in the Ford library show him to have been a friend and fan of such prominent conservatives as Greenspan, Irving Kristol, and the supply-side-economics promoter Jude Wanniski. Remember the Laffer curve, the graph sketched on a napkin by the economist Arthur Laffer, which purported to show that cutting taxes would increase government revenues? It was Cheney's napkin. Practically every attempt by Cheney to move policy in a direction (subtly and unobtrusively, of course) was an attempt to move it in a conservative direction. I often heard stories of Cheney attending policy meetings over the years, and, if he spoke at all, suggesting the most conservative possible option that could emerge from the discussion: lower taxes, less regulation, more tilt to the private sector, and, always, most of all, getting tougher on the Russians. This year, for example, after several weeks of work on the energy task force, he suggested that America could resume building nuclear power plants.



In the mid-eighties, Cheney was one of the leading opponents of Reagan's tax-reform bill, which simplified the tax code and had strong support from both parties, because he thought it contained too many concessions to the Democrats. In our interview, Cheney offered an unusually forthright version of the argument that Republicans are often reluctant to make in public, that we should cut taxes for no other reason than to prevent government from growing. "If we collect those taxes, government'll spend 'em," Cheney said. "And we'll grow—at probably a faster rate than the economy does, and become an ever-larger percentage of our total economic activity in the country, and that'll be a mistake. So to some extent, by preventing government from collecting taxes that it currently has no use for, we avoid a situation in which we collect them and spend them and put them into the baseline to become a permanent part of the government."

People who consider themselves true-blue movement conservatives and know Cheney well have no hesitation about claiming him as one of their own. Ken Adelman told me, "He's not laid-back. A fire burns within him." Senator Larry Craig, of Idaho, another conservative friend of Cheney's, said, "He taught me a very valuable lesson: not all conservatives have to appear to be Neanderthal. Dick's a conservative, but he does it with a style that catches most of you media people off guard, if I can say it that directly." Neoconservatives—mostly ex-liberal, mostly Jewish, very hawkish—regard Cheney as a blue-eyed soul brother. He did not make a journey from the left to the right, as Irving Kristol and many of the others did—it was more like from the moderately nonpolitical to the firmly conservative, in the context of a career as a Republican official rather than as an intellectual. He did, however, evidently get pushed to the right by his interactions with the sixties; when I asked Lynne Cheney what had converted her and her husband to conservatism, she mentioned Wisconsin.


LULLABIES FOR PARENTS
Hush Little Parent
Hush little parent, don't say a thing,
Any minute now, the phone will ring.
It's your son who took the car
And drove it to a biker bar.
He's so drunk he can't see straight,
He needs a ride, please don't be late.
So hush little parent, don't say a thing,
Any minute now, the phone will ring.
Rock-a-Bye Mommy
Rock-a-bye Mommy, lying in bed,
Doomsday scenarios run through your head.
Your daughter's sixteen, she's really a bomb,
Though she's at a party, try to stay calm.
Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Dad
Twinkle, twinkle, little Dad,
Your kids have more than you ever had.
Clothes, computers, DVDs —
So why'd they blow their S.A.T.'s?
Twinkle, twinkle, little Dad,
It's not your fault, so don't be sad.

• •

"I distinctly remember going to class," she said, "and having to walk through people in whiteface, conducting guerrilla theatre, often swinging animal entrails over their heads, as part of a protest against Dow Chemical. And then the shocking thing was that you would enter the classroom and here would be all these nice young people who honestly wanted to learn to write an essay. That, in a sense, was the real university, but this other was what was attracting so much attention."

In 1992, the *Times* published a leaked classified document from inside Cheney's Pentagon, a draft of something called a Defense Planning Guidance, which had been prepared that winter under the direction of Paul Wolfowitz, then the under-secretary for policy. "Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival" on the order of the Soviet Union, the document said. This idea should apply even to friendly nations: we should "discourage them from challenging our leadership." We should "be mindful that democratic change in Russia is not irreversible," and that Russia is "the only power in the world with the capability of destroying the United States." We should make it clear that, rather than international organizations like the United Nations being the guarantors of stability, "the world order is ultimately backed by the U.S."

A Presidential campaign was under way, and the leak set off criticism of the Bush Administration for being too bellicose. A few weeks later, a new, much tamer draft of the Defense Planning Guidance was leaked, one emphasizing the importance of international coöperation and expressing enthusiasm for developing democracy and peace in Russia. This new draft was said to reflect more completely the thinking of Secretary Cheney. Soon the controversy died away.

That impolitic first draft is interesting, though. It is hard to believe that a man as meticulous as Cheney would not have been familiar with the contents in advance. The shop that produced it was the home of his stars, the smartest and most thorough people working for him, the ones he has brought back for key positions in the new Bush Administration. Wolfowitz is Deputy Secretary of Defense, and one of Wolfowitz's top aides in 1992, Lewis Libby, who oversaw the draft, is now Cheney's chief of staff. Consistently so far, the new Administration has been tougher on the Russians, friendlier to the Taiwanese, less deferential to the European allies, and seems more willing to use American military force, rather than diplomacy, as our chief mechanism for dealing with the rest of the world than people expected—more in line, in other words, with the disowned memo's vision of America as the one power in the world. As many friends of Cheney's assured me, we will never know how he advises the President privately, but most of the positions Bush has taken so far are consistent with what is known about Cheney's personal views.

It would appear that Cheney, rather than being an implementer with no agenda, has pronounced ideas about how America's power should be employed. The blankness of his surface and the calmness of his demeanor should be taken as a sign not that he has no views but that he has elected not to put them on display. Isn't that the Western code? You don't talk, you just act. ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE QUEEN HIMSELF

A new show at the British Museum is the biggest Cleopatra fest in two thousand years.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

LEFT: ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM; RIGHT: MUSEO GREGORIANO PROFANO, VATICAN MUSEUMS

On April 12th, a show devoted to Cleopatra opened at the British Museum. London was unseasonably cold that week, and riveted by the latest Windsor scandal: "foot in mouth disease," as the tabloids put it—the taped indiscretions of yet another garrulous royal daughter-in-law. Steak tartare appered on the menus of patriotic pubs. The parks were emerald after a winter of deluges, and the populace, impatient for spring—for any new leaf—had, despite the chill, cast off its heavy clothes.

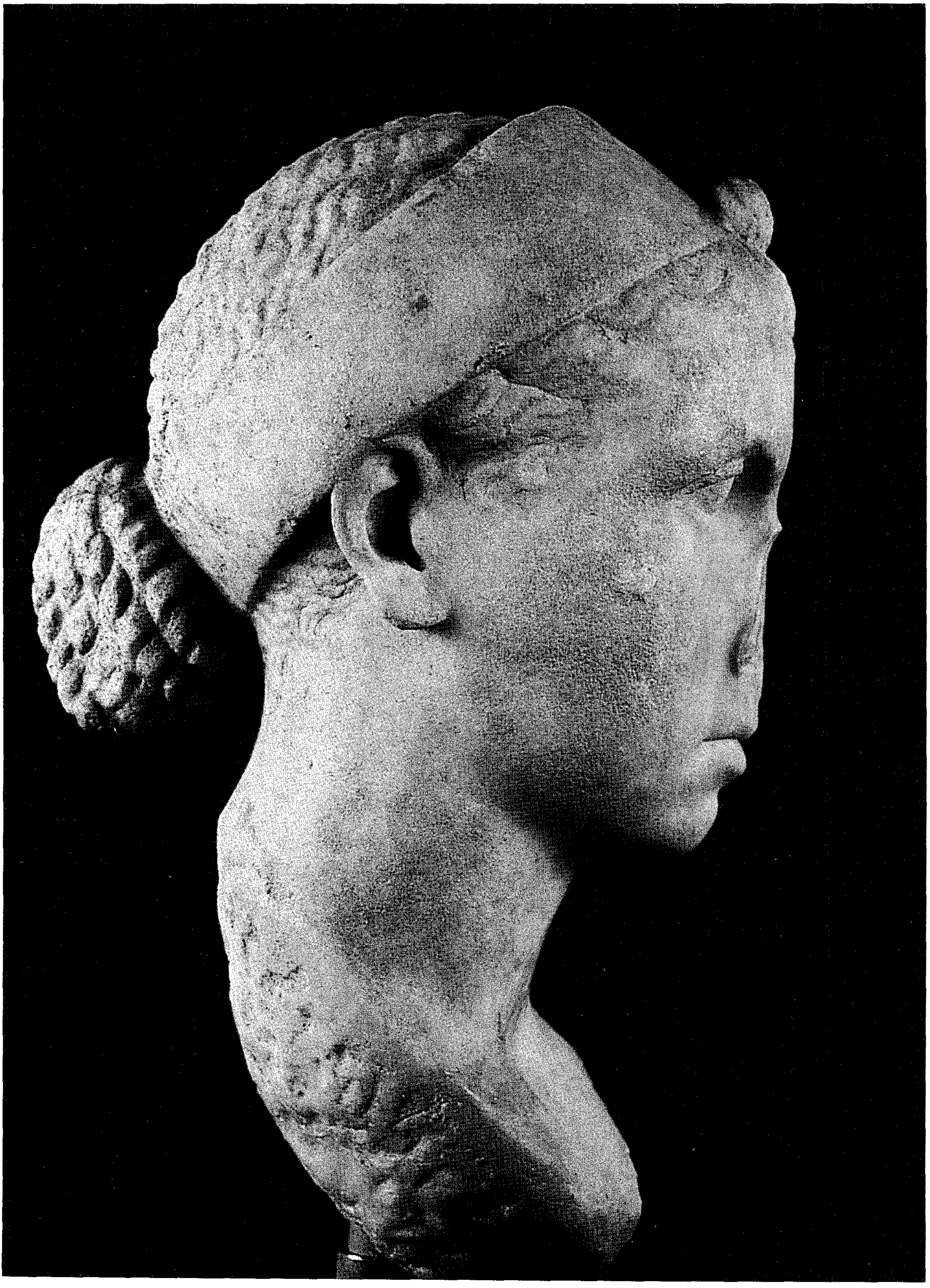
Dressed lightly, as usual, Cleopatra graced the cover of the London *Sunday Times Magazine*. The breaking news from the museum, the article suggested facetiously, was that she'd had rotten teeth (the English seem to be obsessed with dentistry), bad makeup, and a big nose. "Did her lovers have to hold their breath, close their eyes and think of Rome?" Was hers the "triumph of brains over beauty?" In a spectacularly vulgar illustration, the Queen looked like an avatar of Leona Helmsley before plastic surgery.

Actually, there are no sensational revelations in "Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth," which was curated by Susan Walker and Peter Higgs, and which runs until August 26th, then moves to the Field Museum in Chicago. It focusses on the historical figure and relegates the various femmes fatales, ingenues, spendthrifts, and sacred victims of millennial fantasy to the sideshow. This is refreshing. An American museum might have organized something glitzier, perhaps with film clips. The Guggenheim might even have thrown in the costumes. There are, it's true, a couple of charmingly obscene caricatures from the first century showing a Cleopatra-like figure copulating with a crocodile and having sex on a barge. There is a frieze of Hollywood queens in vulture headdresses on one wall, and a small collection—busy and gorgeous—of Old Master portraits. But numismatics is the cornerstone of Cleopatra studies, and most of the wares here are equally hard and scholarly: vitrines of coins and jewelry; mosaics, artifacts, and statuary from the Ptolemaic and Augustan periods; a recently authenticated taxation decree with a royal command—"Make it happen"—written in the Queen's elegant hand; and, what is most noteworthy, seven "newly recognized" Egyptian images of Cleopatra VII, stylized and veristic, in basalt, limestone, and marble, by artists of or close to her time. These handsome relics say little and are most expressive of the distance between us and Cleopatra. Archeology is a lesson in humility. The more we know about the past, it suggests, the more we know that we know precious little.

"Who was Cleopatra?" Walker and Higgs ask in their introduction to the catalogue (Princeton; $60), a hefty work of lively expertise and sumptuous if infuriatingly numbered illustrations. That is a difficult question to answer, at least by the standards of modern biography, because the ancient sources that so richly chronicle her life, describe her person, supply her dialogue, and analyze her motivations (a) have no footnotes, (b) conflict, (c) are almost entirely hostile, and (d), for the most part, postdate her reign. A very small body of fact has inspired a monumental edifice of speculation. So we're left not with a woman but with a character.

Yet Cleopatra is a character as Shakespeare is an artist. Her bounty is inexhaustible. Every age restyles her in its own image and invests her with its own preoccupations. "Many unpleasant things can be said of Cleopatra," A. C. Bradley wrote in 1909, "and the more that are said, the more wonderful she appears." Whoever she was, she represents a unique concentration of fabulous wealth, exalted birth, unchecked ambition, exceptional intelligence, sexual charisma, human frailty, and supreme temporal power in the fertile body of a woman who lived fast and died young. There have been other great queens, but no one of her stature.

That stature was "petite," according



This marble head has been identified as a portrait of Cleopatra VII, Queen of Egypt c. 51-30 B.C. The clay seal impressions on the opposite page display variants on her image, including one with an Egyptian wig and vulture headdress, at center.

to the catalogue—aristocratic women of the period were about five feet tall—and probably quite voluptuous. Cleopatra's great-grandfather was nicknamed Ptolemy Physkon ("Potbelly"). He thought it becoming to exhibit his monstrous (or, as he probably saw it, Dionysiac) obesity in transparent robes to a delegation of visiting Romans, who recorded this gaffe for posterity. Potbelly's grandson, Cleopatra's father, also had an epithet: Auletes, the Flute Player—an allusion both to his love of the instrument sacred to Isis and to his dissipation. The wine, women, and/or boys were subsumed by the song.

Auletes and his queen, Cleopatra V, who was also his sister, had six children. Their middle daughter, who was to become the last of the Ptolemaic pharaohs and the seventh monarch of her name, was born in Alexandria around 69 B.C. She was a princess ostensibly well educated in mathematics, medicine, literature, music, philosophy, and the martial arts. She had ascended to the throne of the richest and most populous country in the Middle East by the age of eighteen. She assassinated or connived in the disappearance of two of her sibling rivals (a younger sister and the second of the two younger brothers she had married in succession), ruled by divine right for twenty-one years, and was worshipped as a living deity. She survived exile and insurrection, raised and commanded armies, shrewdly bestowed her patronage, and negotiated her foreign policy with remarkable finesse—at least as measured by her longevity as a sovereign at one of the most treacherous moments in history, the quicksand period of civil war in Rome.

As we know, the Queen allied herself both strategically and sexually with Julius Caesar, who was thirty-two years her senior, then with Mark Antony, whom she seems truly to have adored. With Caesar she had a son; with Antony a pair of twins, male and female, and a younger boy. Unfortunately for future biographers, the Romans who wrote her story bothered to keep track of her only when one of her two Elvises was, so to speak, in the building. Both were respectably married, and the issue of adultery, which would have been fairly meaningless to Cleopatra—a woman to whom nothing was forbidden—has figured prominently in most later versions of these romances. Antony did leave her behind in Alexandria pregnant with the twins (Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene) to marry the sister of his rival Octavian, a politic union that produced two daughters. Mild, lovely, noble, virtuous, self-sacrificing Octavia—ancestress of Nero and Caligula—has always played the role of Krystle to Cleopatra's Alexis in their dynastic saga. But even those writers who have judged the Queen harshly have shown a touching sympathy for her imagined humiliations as the Other Woman.

It seems improbable that the teenage Cleopatra arranged to meet the grizzled Caesar for the first time by having herself delivered to his quarters in her own palace rolled in a carpet; or that, as Pliny tells it, she challenged Antony to outspend her at duelling banquets, then, to win her bet, dissolved the world's largest pearl—one of a pair she wore as earrings—in a cruet of vinegar and drank it. But everything we know about her is improbable. She had a genius for drama (and self-dramatization), underwritten by an unlimited budget for props and extras. Her sense of stagecraft was informed by her knowledge of myth and tragedy, and by her intimate experience of murderous intrigues and of ritual veneration.

"Who moved my copy of 'Who Moved My Cheese'?"

In 47 B.C., Cleopatra gave birth to Caesar's son, Caesarion, and minted a coin on which she appeared as Aphrodite nursing Eros. By now she was married to her youngest brother, but he was only twelve, hardly mature enough to claim his conjugal rights. Caesar had pacified their kingdom, and the next year Cleopatra followed him to Rome, where she lived in one of his suburban villas, made an enemy of Cicero with her haughtiness, dazzled the patricians with her wit—Rome was considerably more provincial than Alexandria—and inspired a craze for things Egyptian. Caesar, in a gesture that signalled his own aspirations to divinely ordained kingship, if not his infatuation, installed a golden statue of his mistress in the temple of Venus Genetrix, divine mother of the Julian line. It became a popular attraction and was still standing in the third century. Two years later, the Senate named Caesar dictator for life, and he drew up legislation that, according to the catalogue, "clearly bore [Cleopatra's] fingerprints" and would have permitted him to marry her legally, legitimatize their son, and establish a second capital for the empire at Alexandria. "The demise of this programme came with his assassination," on the ides of March in 44 B.C.

As Mark Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian, who was Caesar's grandnephew and legal heir, battled Cassius and Brutus for control of the empire, Cleopatra fled Italy and regained an Egypt gripped by famine and plague. It was a perilous moment for her, and she had no protector. Her sister Arsinoë, imprisoned in Rome, had managed to install a puppet on the throne—a boy pretending to be Ptolemy XIII, their dead brother. Once Cleopatra had deposed him and settled the disturbances in her capital, she adopted a prudent course of neutrality toward both factions in the Roman civil war, making promises of support that she delayed in keeping. Procrastination was as much the instrument of her statesmanship as seduction, and it served her well. So did a carefully nurtured alliance with the Egyptian clergy, who helped to promote her cult as the mother goddess.

After much intrigue and bloodshed, the victorious party of Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian divvied up the empire. Antony took the east and embarked on a leisurely and sybaritic grand tour to consolidate his power and collect taxes. He was greeted everywhere as a "new Dionysus," and in 41 B.C. he summoned Cleopatra, his client monarch, to a meeting at Tarsus, in Cilicia (southeastern Turkey). According to Plutarch, she ignored his letters, tried his patience, and whetted his appetite. Eventually—having artfully spread the rumor that, "for the good and happiness of Asia," the goddess of love was sailing up the Cydnus River for a "festive reception" with the god of the vine—she showed up in a gilded barge with purple sails and oars of silver, wreathed in incense, attended by maids and pages dressed as sea nymphs and cupids, and arrayed as Aphrodite. She was twenty-eight, an age, according to Plutarch, "when women's beauty is most splendid, and their intellects are in full maturity." Antony was forty-one.

Already by the time of Caesar's death, and whatever she really looked like, Cleopatra's reputation as a voracious and fatal temptress was well established, and in the course of her alliance with Antony it acquired mythic proportions. Sextus Propertius claimed that she "fornicated even with her slaves." Plutarch reports that she and Antony, who tarried for a year with her in Alexandria after their summit, formed a secret society of fellow-hedonists known as the Inimitables, who dedicated their lives to *methe*, drunkenness, and that this was the motto the Queen engraved on her ring. Lucan—and one has to suspect that he cross-dressed in secret—thrilled to the excesses of her décor, wardrobe, and diet: "The great door-posts [of her palace] were solid ebony, not common timber with an ebony veneer. . . . Her white breasts showed through the Chinese silk which, though closely woven when imported, had been teased out by some Egyptian mercer until it became diaphanous. . . . Every delicacy that extravagance, prompted not by hunger but by a mad love of ostentation, could rout out from the ends of the earth came served on golden dishes." Plutarch sketches a temperate and beguiling character that is perhaps no more accurate than that of the Websterian virago. "Her beauty," he allows, "was not incomparable," but "the attraction of her person, joining with the charm of her conversation . . . was something bewitching."

Cleopatra's couplings may have been affairs of the heart or of the loins for the woman, but they were matters of state for the monarch. As Egypt she went to bed with Rome.

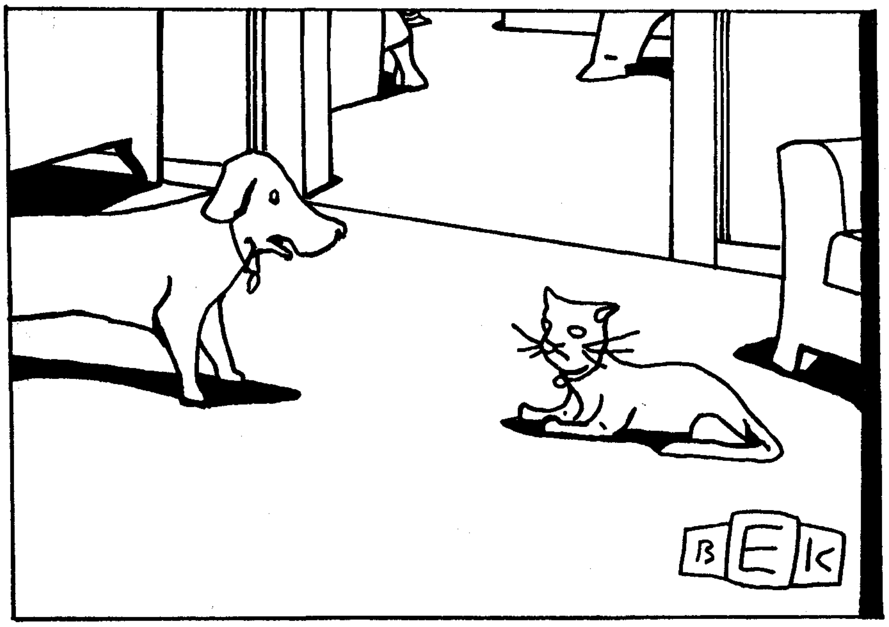
"Nefertiti is a face without a queen," André Malraux wrote, "and Cleopatra is a queen without a face." Because her images have been so scarce, dispersed, and disputed—and certainly because she was a woman—the question of who she was has been conflated with the mystery of what she looked like. Could she really have been black?

The first Ptolemy was a Macedonian general who assumed power in 323 B.C. upon the death of Alexander the Great, Egypt's conqueror. All subsequent pharaohs were of Macedonian, that is to say, ethnic Greek, origin. Greek was the language of the court, the bureaucracy, and the race-proud ruling class. Cleopatra is said to have been the only member of her dynasty who bothered to learn Egyptian—in addition to perhaps as many as eight other tongues. Her gifts as a linguist would greatly facilitate her dealings with subject people and rival monarchs.

The Macedonian rulers of Egypt assimilated certain traditional pharaonic customs, though more to ingratiate themselves with the powerful native priesthood than with their subjugated people. One of these customs was royal incest. Three hundred years of strict inbreeding would seem to qualify the house for a Darwin Award. When I asked a Greek friend who is a student of the period how the Ptolemies could possibly have survived so much intermarriage between siblings, she replied, "Infanticide." Since daughters were likelier to be culled than sons, the girls who made it to puberty must have been an exceptionally clever, robust, and comely lot.

But the laws of Egypt regarding marriage, property, divorce, and inheritance, even among commoners, had long been more liberal toward women than those of Greece or Rome. Queens had been co-regents with brothers and uncles for millennia. The Ptolemies recognized the virtues of this arrangement, though occasionally one of their queens came to exercise sole power. Cleopatra I was the first to do so, and her competent if ruthless management of the kingdom for sixteen years (193-176 B.C.) legitimatized a precedent that her great-great-granddaughter would not forget. Certain of the Ptolemaic queens were Seleucid, which is to say Greeks from Syria. But there is at least one blank in their otherwise well-documented bloodline—the obscure consort of Cleopatra's grandfather, Ptolemy IX. It is said that she was a concubine. So it is possible, though unlikely, that Cleopatra VII was of mixed descent. There is no question, however, that the figure she cut to the Romans who reviled her was as troubling and hybrid, even monstrous, as an Egyptian deity's. The nature of the monster is summed up nicely on a temple stele where Cleopatra is referred to as "the queen himself."

The curators of this show have, with diligence and tenacity, assembled under one roof every probable extant likeness of Cleopatra. Yet even the bronze and silver drachmas struck by her own



"I'm trying to position myself as loyal."

mints disagree about her profile. On some she appears as a "radiant" young Greek woman with full cheeks, a small head festooned with tight braids gathered into a bun, and a finely chiselled nose. On others she has the aspect of a crone, with a taurine neck and a hawkish beak—or, better, of "Mark Antony in a wig," as Mary Hamer puts it in her book "Signs of Cleopatra." That, of course, was very likely the Queen's intention. It was with Antony that she hoped to rule the world, and, had they not been crushed definitively by Octavian at the great naval battle of Actium in September of 31 B.C., she undoubtedly would have.

Cleopatra's liaison with Antony lasted for a decade, with a three-year hiatus when he left her for Octavia. It was also frequently interrupted by his soldiering, although he sometimes took her along, at least part of the way. Wherever they travelled—Antioch, Samos, Athens, or Ephesus (and it was here that Antony is said to have plundered the great library of Pergamum to restock the shelves of Cleopatra's library at Alexandria, which had been decimated by fire)—their train was flamboyant. And whenever they converged again in her capital their reunions were, as their first meeting at Tarsus had been, uninhibitedly bacchanalian. In 36 B.C., they had a third child, Ptolemy Philadelphus. It is logical that their passion was both tempered and fuelled by the mistrust, the opportunism, the ever-present sense of danger and attunement to betrayal that were natural between allies in the ancient world when so much was at stake. But in time they seem to have become something anachronistically modern: a doting couple.

Cities, provinces, and kingdoms were always Cleopatra's business, despite a coy remark, attributed to her by Plutarch, to the effect that big, strong Antony's "game" was world conquest while hers was tending the home fires. As Antony's relations with Octavian deteriorated, Cleopatra became his bulwark in the east—providing the manpower and the capital essential for his campaigns. In exchange, she demanded and received successive bequests of land—vast ones—which restored the Egyptian empire, albeit briefly, to its former glory. They invested their children with titles and dominions, and engaged them, however precociously, to the offspring of neighboring royalty—the first stage of a long-term imperial strategy. They minted the coins on which they resemble each other, with his head on the obverse and hers on the reverse. If she took on some of his attributes, he took on some of hers, appearing at her side as a fellow-divinity.

At least until 32 B.C., when Antony repudiated Octavia in Athens, and Octavian read Antony's will to the Senate (stipulating that he be buried in Alexandria with Cleopatra), he enjoyed great popular support in Rome. But he never returned to rally it, leaving the political stage to his enemy—a cavalier miscalculation that, like Caesar's, seems to have had the Queen's "fingerprints" on it. Perhaps her effect on him was as despotic and intoxicating as the poets claimed. Rumors reached Rome that he had abandoned his toga for the Greek *chlamys;* that she reviewed his troops with a bodyguard of Praetorians; that he followed her litter humbly on foot (though not, as Shakespeare would add so provocatively, that she wore his sword).

Antony's alleged response, recorded by Suetonius, when Octavian, playing the outraged brother-in-law, protested his multiple desertions and sacrileges, strikes a rather too pedantically macho note: "What has changed your mind: that I am screwing the queen? Is she my wife? Have I just begun, or have I been doing it nine years already? And do you screw only Drusilla? . . . Does it really matter where and in whom you get it up?" Evidently, it did. "It seemed possible," Lucan wrote, "that the world would be ruled by a woman, and not a Roman woman, either."

Octavian finally declared war not against Antony but against the "harlot queen" of Egypt and her "withered eunuchs." In preparation for the inevitable showdown, Antony and Cleopatra had established a string of military staging points along the west coast of Greece, and by the autumn of 32 B.C. they had assembled a formidable force of ships and men. But, in the months before Actium, they seemed more intent on revels, tourism, and staging a mammoth theatre festival at Samos than on securing their rear and their supply lines. As the Roman legions, led by the great Agrippa, inexorably bulldozed their way northward from Methone, Cleopatra supposedly urged Antony to make a final stand at sea. He may have had no choice, but most accounts of the battle hold the Queen at least partially responsible for this and a series of other strategic blunders that precipitated their catastrophe. She was personally in command of a third of the fleet, and for obscure reasons, generally portrayed as feminine cowardice or panic, she hoisted her purple sails and, with the outcome of the engagement still in dispute, gave the order for a sudden breakout toward open water. Some of her vessels, including the royal flagship, which was laden with her treasury, did breach the Roman blockade and regained Alexandria. It is said that when Antony saw her flee he abandoned his troops in order to pursue her. Octavian's chroniclers celebrated his victory as a morally uplifting rout of a "lascivious fury" who, having unmanned a great warrior, had aspired to corrupt a virile commonwealth.

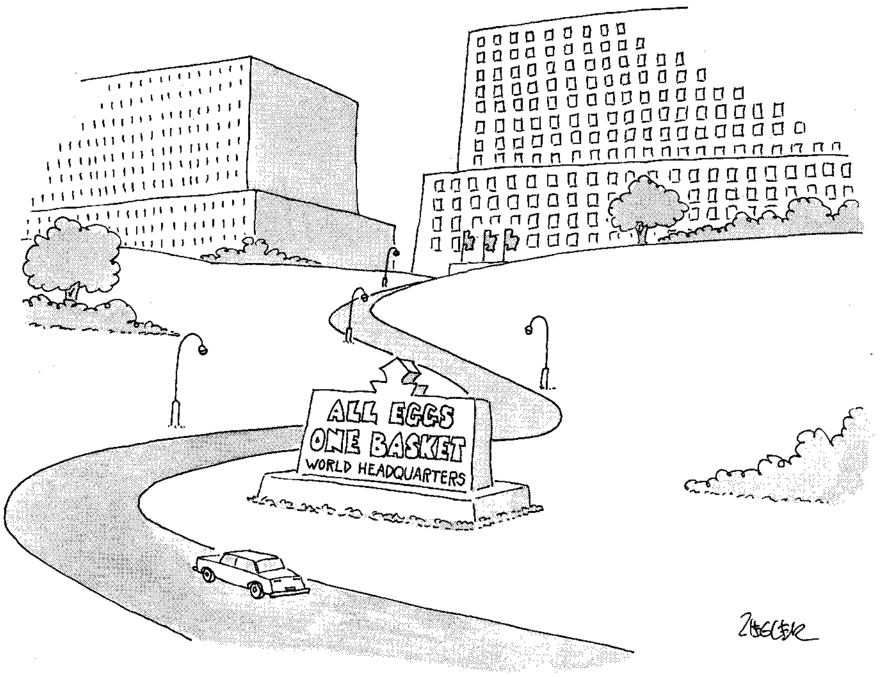
The last Cleopatra show as comprehensive as this one may have taken place in 29 B.C., when Octavian decorated the newly refurbished ("purified" was the official term) Capitoline temples and Senate House with the spoils from Cleopatra's tomb. The Emperor had hoped to exhibit the Queen herself—no longer himself—but she had thwarted him a year after the Battle of Actium, when he finally overran her capital, by outwitting her guards (she was under a suicide watch) to slip the mortal coil. Apparently, she died with more panache than Antony, who fell upon his sword, missed his vital organs, lingered in agony, and was finally hoisted up through a window (the doors were barred) to breathe his last in Cleopatra's arms. Octavian had refused her pleas for mercy and an offer to abdicate in favor of her children. If one can credit the operatic and conflicting accounts of their final interview (in one, she was dressed to kill; in another, she had torn out her hair in grief, and clawed her wasted cheeks until they bled), he also resisted her last-ditch attempt to seduce him.

However much the Romans deplored her life, they unanimously approved her death—noble as one of their own. "No one knows the truth about [its] manner," Plutarch admits, though supposedly two small fang marks were found on her arm. But if the instrument of her suicide was a snake, it was probably a cobra rather than an asp. The venom of the latter produces lingering and unsightly suffering, the bite of the former a swift, relatively painless petrifaction, and the cobra had as much symbolic as anesthetic value. On the basis of research done for this exhibition, scholars now authenticate Cleopatra's portraits by the trinity of cobras she wore on her distinctive diadem. However she died, even Octavian's famously stony heart must have melted a little at the sight of her body. The future emperor honored Antony's will and Cleopatra's last request: that they be buried together. Their gravesite has never been found.

Historians generally agree that what we like fondly to call Western civilization was based on the "Apollonian" civic model of Augustan Rome. Octavian became Augustus in the eighth month of 27 B.C., the third anniversary of his defeat of Dionysian Cleopatra. This leads Mary Hamer to suggest that our enduring fascination with her is as an "originary myth," a dark one, that punishes female desire and ambition and gives woman her place in the social order. Yet one could also argue that our fascination with Cleopatra endures precisely because she confounds the originary myth. Her desire and ambition have been rewarded with immortality; she disdains a place in the social order. And, while her coins may tarnish between polishings, her image has, for two millennia, been proof as much against Roman propaganda as against Hollywood kitsch, Orientalist fetishizing, and identity politics.

After days at the museum among crowds of restive schoolchildren on their Easter break, I spent my evenings with a friend who was closing up a Victorian row house that she had recently inherited. Its owners, a poet and his wife, of gentle birth and disposition, had, like the ancient Egyptians, been devout cat worshippers. In sixty years, they had collected much that was rare but had repaired nothing that was mundane. Their orphaned felines had been adopted, though pigeons still roosted in the leaking rafters. My friend kept finding, in this ghostly dovecote, many a curious, ancient talisman, and one night she showed me a coin that had been lodged in the floorboards beneath a ragged Persian carpet. It was worn to the shape of a waning moon and so blackened with age that we couldn't tell if the metal was bronze or silver, or read the inscription. But under a loupe we could discern the profile of a woman with handsome features and a head of tight braids banded by a diadem. It seemed familiar, even in its improbability.

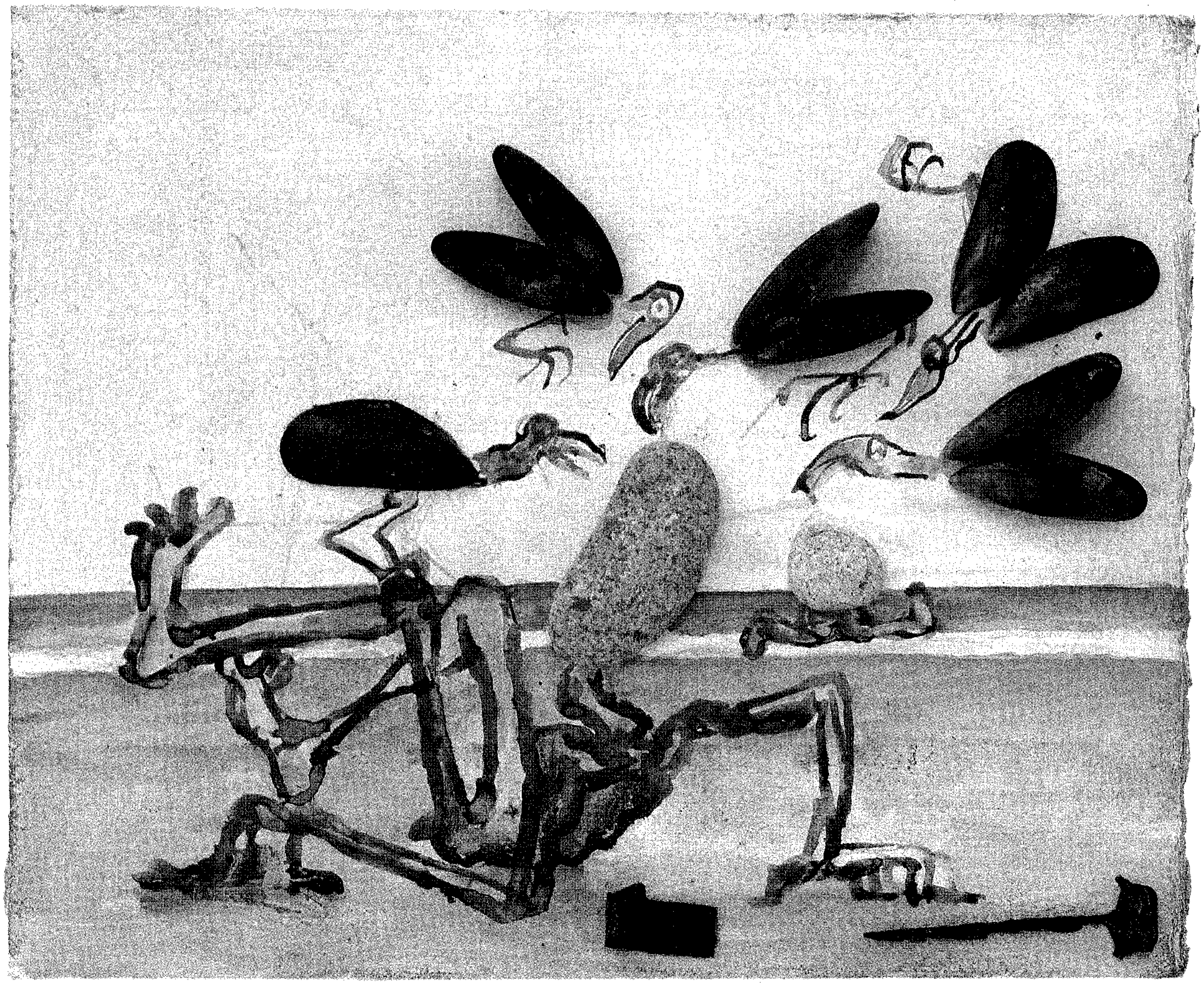
"The profile," Isak Dinesen wrote, "is the true face of a king," by which she meant—as the Windsors have discovered—that when he moves out of symbolic silhouette and into the glare of secular illumination he loses his majesty. That will never happen to Cleopatra. There's not enough light to throw. ♦



FICTION

DIGESTIONS

BY JIM CRACE



ANDRÉ FRANÇOISE

MUSSELS ON THE HOUSE

Here is an average restaurant. Each Sunday, we take our seats to order omelettes and to watch the chef present our mussels to the visitors. He has become the weekend entertainment of the town. There's nothing else to do—except in church, or ten miles up the coast, away from friends and family.

Last summer (so the chef reports), a politician from the state drove through. The woman with him couldn't have been his wife. They sat right there, next to the window with a sideways view down to the port. He ordered local produce for her ("I always dine from the region," he said. "That's how you end up with the simplest and the freshest food." The cheapest, too). They'd have the brandied aubergines to start with, oily, cold, lascivious—and then the pork stew and a bottle of the earthy hillside wine that no one from the region drinks. You can imagine what he had in mind for her—what with the alcohol, the aphrodisiacs, his hand pushed out across the tabletop to stroke her painted fingernails, the showing off.

A little ancient jealousy from Chef, perhaps, explains what happened next. The politician only wanted to impress his guest and not be made a fool of by the food. He had a point. The wine bottle was insufficiently chilled, he complained. The bread (served in one of the yellow, woven-plastic baskets that gave the restaurant its name) was "not today's." The aubergine was bitter. Had no one in the kitchens degorged it with salt before they dished it up? Did they employ a comic or a cook?

The waiter at that time (a student

long since gone up north with one of our town's better-looking girls) returned the wine and the dish of aubergine to the kitchens. "I heard!" the chef said. "So give them my apologies. And they can have two dozen mussels on the house."

Oh, surely everybody knows that our mussels can be dangerous, particularly at that time of the year. The tides are far too weak in summer to clear the soup of sewage from the banks. Dead shellfish decompose more thoroughly when it is warm. So was it just bad luck that nearly all the mussels that finished up on that free dish were treacherous?

Now, this is supposition. No one truly knows exactly how the lovers spent their afternoon. It's possible, of course, that their intestines had been lined with steel and that the sifted toxins of our lavatories passed through without effect. But where's the anecdote in that? We'd rather have the chef's report, in which (and God knows how Chef knew) the politician and his lunch guest had hardly reached the hotel down the coast when justice called. It might have seemed to other guests or to the ever-patient clerk that their eagerness to reach the room was simple summer lust. But no, they were too pinched about the haunches and too self-involved to be true lovers. And no, his hands were shaking at the lock with something more disruptive—and less fleeting—than desire. Inside at last, alone, they would have tussled for the sink and toilet seat, her skirt half up, his trousers down, but not for the reasons they had planned.

Indeed, the politician had been right to ask; the chef was more a comic than a cook. The stories that he served were better than the food. He made good soufflé out of lies. He made bad soufflé out of eggs. And so, while we might risk only the omelettes or grilled fish on our visits to the Yellow Basket, we never tired of his stories of revenge or of hearing him reproduce on the espresso machine the sound those depth-charged stomachs must have made when his rogue mussels were propelled into the hotel room that summer afternoon. We didn't mind the repetitions, or that he would always illustrate the color of the diners' skin by holding a lime up to the light, or that some of the details changed—improved with each retelling.

Was it then simply to please himself or to keep us in his thrall (and in his restaurant) that Chef announced at the beginning of this season that mussels would be served "by way of an apology" more regularly at the Yellow Basket? He says that he can tell which mussels will be troublesome. The safe ones snap shut at once if they've been prized open with a fork. The dead ones don't. Others to avoid are those with shells that have unhinged before being cooked and any that do not fall open to accept the sacrament of garlic butter and parsley once (according to his recipe) they have been roasted in hot ash. All these unworthy ones are set aside for Chef's selected guests. Perhaps he's only teasing us, but still, we have to—want to—swallow all his words.

They look so innocent, those blue-black castanets, their pearly inner cases and their fat gray beans of meat. But they have caused, this year, a banker from America to spoil his trousers and the front seat of his car. And they have packed their dark export of bacteria into the luggage of at least three lady pensioners from the cruise liner that puts into our port on its round trip each spring. The on-board doctor almost had to have one of the women lifted off by helicopter. And the chef's apology has given the sweats, the vomits, and the chills, the cramps and the diarrhea, to one lone diner from Milan, two German boys, a family of five with noisy children, a Princeton graduate, a priest, the owner of a smart boutique in France, a couple planning a divorce, several state executives, and (according to the chef) a gastronomic writer from the *Times Magazine*. It was as if we'd made these strangers pregnant. They'd gone away with our dull, revengeful town inside. And they'd rebirthed our mussels down the coast.

So as we lift his omelette to our mouths each Sunday lunchtime, we pray for troublemakers. We pray that Chef will be offended by his passing visitors, that they'll complain, that he will offer his apologies and speak those paralyzing words "I hope you will accept a plate of mussels on the house." We do not like to stare, of course, but it is hard to resist a sideways look from time to time. We want to see the empty shells pile up.

So this is how an average restaurant can always have its tables occupied.

But best of all is on the street, when the driver of too large a car, or the possessor of an accent we don't like, or merely someone who appears too fortunate inquires, "Where is a decent place to eat?" It is a duty and a joy to point and say, "The Yellow Basket. Up above the port. The mussels are quite good, I hear. *Bon appétit.*" An unexpected opportunity.

We're cruel, of course. We're unforgivable. Why should we punish them simply for coming from a different place or having better lives or being on vacation? The pleasure that we get when we imagine how they'll pass their afternoons is hardly warranted. We know our laughter is malicious—but surely there's some justice in it, too.

We feel as if we've cast a heavy stone onto the all too perfect surface of the sea, to send our ripples out against the waves.

GEORGE'S MAGIC COOKIES

The rumors started when—a rare event—one of the prison guards was spotted shopping in the square where Jo and his forebears had kept their bakery since 1841. It was the evening before the execution. Next day, a murderer was due to die in the Correction Facility, two kilometres out of town. Too close for comfort. Everybody was on edge. The air seemed thin and aromatic with the prospect and proximity of such a death. Old baker Jo was bald and staid and not the most progressive of men. "Don't waste your sympathy," he said. But George, his son—the one who runs the bakery today and has become the mirror image of his dad and just as difficult—was a libertarian. He wore long hair tucked up inside his baker's cap and spent any time when he wasn't slaving for his family in the cake, bread, and pastry business at the far end of the quay with his guitar and some unlikely friends. I used to watch them smoking pot with my binoculars and wish I had the courage to saunter down and join them. He was our only hippie then. And he wore flour in his hair.

It seems the prison guard had drawn attention to himself by buying a suspicious assortment of foods. Some freshly

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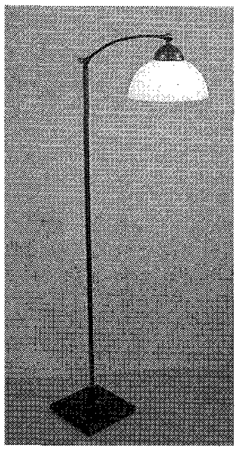

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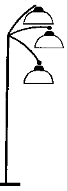

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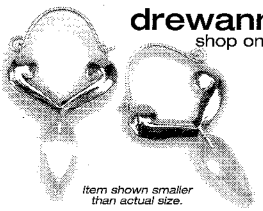

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shucked oysters, from the basket girl. Two strawberry milkshakes, from the cafeteria. A slab of coffee chocolate. A piece of pummelled beefsteak. Nectarines. It wasn't long before the whispering began. These items had to be the condemned man's final meal, they said. His choices had death engraved all over them.

Then, of course, when the prison guard was spotted talking to George at the rear door of the shop and money was seen to be exchanged for a bakery bag, any fool could guess what was going on. No doubt about it. The bag contained some of young George's Magic Cookies or Sister Mary Mix or Lebanese Red Loaf or Sweet Dream biscuits or whatever it was that George provided for those long-haired travellers who queued a touch too patiently amongst the locals waiting for their bread. The murderer, for his last meal, had found a way of dining on oblivion. Good luck to him.

I don't believe that anybody slept too late the following morning. Baker Jo was standing in the street by 8 A.M., affecting an inspection of his window display but really with his eyes fixed on the gray woods high above the town where, at that moment, as they thought, that boy, that man, that murderer was sitting down with plastic plates and plastic cutlery to oysters, milkshake, chocolate, nectarines, and beef to fortify his final hour on the earth. He'd save his magic pastries till the last. We all knew that. He'd want to fly away. Surely George's baking, his sorcery, would let the man break free.

The hour struck. Some drivers sounded their horns. An emergency congregation spoke its prayers outside the church. Somebody clapped, but mostly people shook their heads, checked their watches for the umpteenth time, and went about their lives with less than half an eye fixed on the heavens.

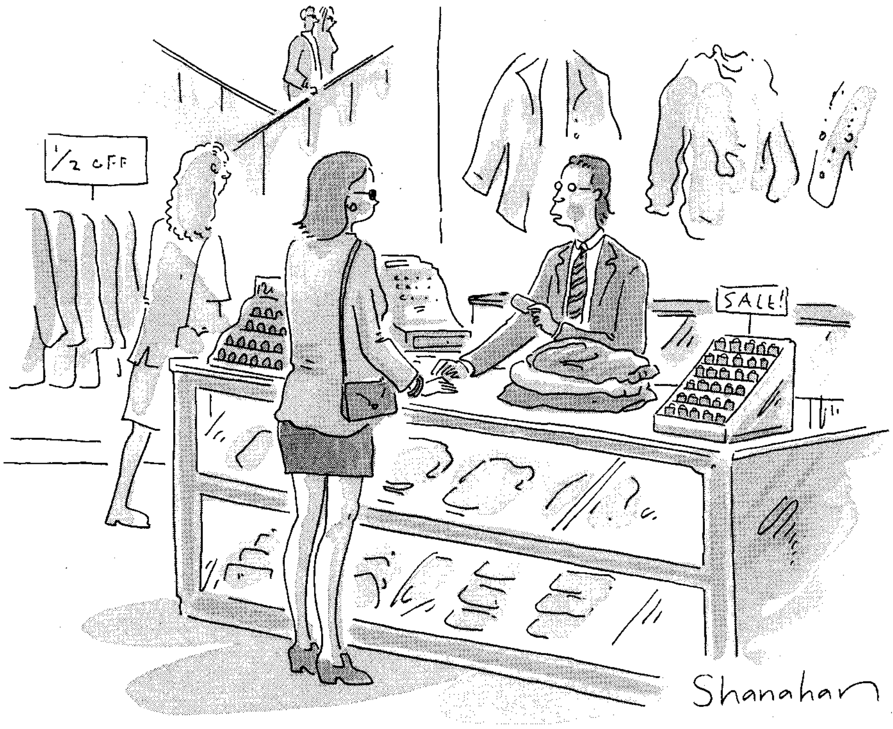
I watched the execution through my binoculars from our top room. They pulled the prison buildings into town. I could see the detailed silence of the place: the dead, parked cars; the office doors ajar; the tiny windows of the block; the clouds as solid as the hills. The only movement was the slight stirring of a flag. Then the prison came to life again. The yards were quickly filled with exercising men. A van backed up. The winds began to lift the flag and shift the clouds. And for an instant, I could swear, the sky went pink with melody, not death. But I was sentimental in those days. The rumors that I'd heard the evening before had made me ready for and keen to glimpse transcendence with a pair of human wings.

George and I have not been friends for many years. I was, I am, too dull for him. But he was unusually friendly when we met at the far end of the quay today. I recalled how I used to spy on him with my binoculars and how I used to wish that we were close. So, while we smoked our cigarettes and looked out across the ocean at the ferries and the tankers, I reminded him of those uncomplicated days. Did he remember how he used to play guitar to foreign girls? He smiled at that. Did he remember those hashish cakes and drug-laced biscuits that he used to bake behind his father's back? He laughed. They'd made him rich. And were they true, those rumors that we heard about the executed man and what he ate for breakfast?

"That's more than thirty years ago," George said. "I can't remember all my customers." He rubbed his floury hands across the bald crown of his head. The day was loud with wind and sea and gulls, the straining of the anchored quay, and at our backs the honking cars, the muttered prayers, the clapping hands, the less than half-regarded heavens of the town. "But I'll say this," George added finally. "If that guy had my cakes for breakfast, even though it might be thirty years ago, he's flying still. Those cakes of mine were savage stuff. He probably hasn't even realized he's dead yet. He's giggling up there. He's floating and he's giggling. His pupils are like pinheads. His skull's on fire. He can't stand up. He can't sit down. And, boy, he's hungry. He could eat a horse."

MONDAY'S SOUP

His breath was damp and earthy. The old man had tuberous growths in his gut. Dr. Gregor could palpate them with his palm. They were starchy, as tough as carrots. "There is



"Your card is overwrought."

• •

some inflammation," he said. "Nothing to worry about. Rest is what you need." What was the point of alarming a man of eighty-two with an honest diagnosis, with hospitals, with surgery? He would be dead within the month. "Are you in any pain?" The old man shook his head. The doctor prescribed warm olive oil to "ease the passage through your bowel."

He did not die within the month. He lasted ten more months before he came to Dr. Gregor's clinic again. It was the spring of the drought. He looked as tough and sinewy as a man of half his age. Indeed, he looked a little younger than before, though he was eighty-three now. "Are you in any pain?" the doctor asked again. "A little. Once in a while." When he bent to tie his boots, he explained, or tug at weeds, the hard knots in his stomach bunched against the waistband of his trousers. It was uncomfortable. What man of eighty-three could bend to touch his boots without a little pain? "I think I'd better take a look," the doctor said. He helped the old man onto the examination table and turned him on his side, his face toward the wall. He pulled on a pair of disposable lubricated gloves. "Knees up. This shouldn't take a second. Think of somewhere nice." The old man searched for somewhere nice. At first it was the modest garden where he now lived in town: the tiny square of lawn, the hem of evergreens, the single potted maple on the patio. But soon he settled on the larger piece of land that he had owned when he was younger: its trees, its stony paths, its dogged thistles, its flinty earth, the vegetables which he would harvest on summer Sundays and bring up to the house in a trug.

The doctor did not have to penetrate too deeply beyond the sphincter to find the woody growths in his patient's bowel. Perhaps they were elephantine polyps of some kind, and not a string of cancers. Perhaps they were benign. Clearly they caused no pain, except when the old man stooped to touch his toes. Dr. Gregor pushed against the lowest tumor with his index finger. It did not seem attached, but moved freely. Its shape was odd. It was not symmetrical or funnelled but complex with extensions and recessions, like the chambered plaster cast of an earthroach burrow. "Have you examined your stool of late? Anything unusual? Any blood?" The old man shook his head. Why would he want to examine his stool?

The doctor was not a sentimental or a squeamish man. He managed to work a couple of small "polyps" loose. He put one in a lidded specimen tub and labelled it with a date and a reference for the laboratories. The other he put in a sterile bag with a little purified water. He was puzzled, but doctors are often puzzled. Let the laboratories give a name to it. He put his arm around the old man's shoulders and took him to the door. "Warm olive oil," he said.

Laboratories can take a month to analyze and process specimens. Dr. Gregor did not think the matter urgent enough to telephone for their report. The old man was fit, for eighty-three. What was a month to him? They'd get their answers soon enough. In fact, the old man died within a week of his last visit to the surgery. A sudden and unheralded stroke, too quick to experience. A neighbor called the doctor out one morning and led him to the body. His patient must have died the evening before. He'd been standing in his tiny garden with a hose. The grass and shrubs were green with care, despite the weeks of drought. The tap had been running all night long. The old man lay on his back in shallow water.

Slugs were on his shirt and trousers, taking refuge from the flood. There was a smell—damp and earthy as the old man's breath had been. It was the smell of vegetation. So that was that. He'd made a decent age and met a decent death.

The laboratories sent their report and their invoice. The old man's specimen was described as "noninvasive," "benign," and "entirely vegetable: water 83 per cent; albuminoids 2 per cent; gum 9.1 per cent; sugar 4.2 per cent; inulin 1.1 per cent." Dr. Gregor held the "polyp" he had kept up to the light in its sterile bag. It seemed more swollen. The inside of the bag was silvery with condensation. He paid the laboratory bill by check. A waste of time and money. He could not pass the costs on to a patient now. He put the swelling polyp on his windowsill. He did not like to part with it, now that the man was dead. Encouraged by the heat and light and by the purified water, the vegetable grew a pair of tiny yellow horns. Its wrinkles flattened. Its extensions and recessions achieved a kind of rippling puberty. One horn pinkened, lengthened, and uncurled. The old man's polyp had a shoot. The doctor put it in a glass dish on a bed of damp toilet paper. He watered it each day. He gave it houseplant feed. Quite soon, he had three green shoots and two more horns. Roots as thin as cotton threads clung to the damp paper. He had to pick a greenfly from its stem. A patient—asked to lean against the windowsill while Dr. Gregor checked her damaged vertebrae—recognized it as a tuber. Not a tumor, then? "I've never grown these ones myself," she said. "It's root ginger, isn't it? Or Jerusalem artichoke? What do they taste like? Does it smell?" The doctor held it to his nose. The old man's breath again. "You'll have to pot it up," the patient said. "It won't survive on that!"

The doctor sent his nurse out to the shops to buy a pot and some compost. He thumbed the polyp into the soil, damaging only a couple of shoots. He put the plant outside the front door of his surgery. His patients dropped their cigarette ends into the pot, or spat into the soil. The soil flourished on bronchitis. The plant put up three good stems, with heavy leaves, and—at the end of the summer—three inconspicuous yellow flowers, at shoulder height. The old dears coming for their pills didn't have to bend to press their noses to the blooms. The yellow petals were busy with weevils. His patient's diagnosis was confirmed by some of the many gardeners on the doctor's list: they were Jerusalem artichokes—or Canadian potatoes, as one man called them—not root ginger.

In September, the three stems and their leaves dried out and died. They broke away, and the pot became an ashtray, nothing else. In November, Dr. Gregor found a moment to carry the pot through to the yard behind the surgery. He turned the soil out onto a plastic bag. He planned to wash the pot and plant a basil in it, or a daphne. Something colorful or evergreen to put on the steps. There were a dozen clusters of the old man's polyps multiplying in the soil, a starchy kilo at the very least. The doctor picked them out and put them in the emptied pot. They smelled of soot. "More trouble than they're worth," his nurse remarked. "Except in soup!" That night he took the crop to his apartment. He did not peel them or attempt to scrape them. They were too oddly shaped. He scrubbed half of them in warm water. He cooked them au gratin with bacon curls. His brother and his sister-in-law came for dinner. The Jerusalem artichokes, he said, were the gift of a patient: "He grew them himself." They tasted bland and floury. According to his sister-in-law, they would have benefited from a pinch of coriander, say, or more salt.

Dr. Gregor was fond of his brother and of his brother's wife, but she was far too keen to give advice on what would benefit his life, his work, his apartment, his cooking. More salt. A dab of paint. A housekeeper. A bit of color in his clothes. A holiday. A wife. "Why don't you settle down?" Or, "Find a woman for yourself. That nurse of yours is quite a decent sort."

The doctor showed his brother and his wife to the door. He let them take the half kilo of Jerusalem artichokes that had not been scrubbed and cooked. For their kitchen garden. His guests were a little windy from their meal. Their breaths were damp and earthy. "They're nice, but indigestible," his brother said. "Are you in any pain?" Dr. Gregor asked. "Take warm olive oil, to ease their passage through your bowels." He wondered if he should have said more about the artichokes, how natural, how death-defying, and how benign they were.

The doctor's brother dug the tubers into a trench of flinty earth, amongst the dogged thistles at the bottom of his garden. He put in lime and compost. In summer there were yellow flowers, and in autumn there were tubers by the kilo. On Sundays, he would harvest them and bring his trug of starchy vegetables up into the house. They made the perfect Monday soup, which kept the brother and his wife warm and bilious in winter.

WILD FUNGI

The devil wanders with his straw sack, at night, through the meadows and the woods behind the town. He's there, we're told, to plant the mushrooms that he's raised in Hell, where there's no light to green them, so that the gatherers who come at dawn, against the wisdoms of the countryside, can satisfy their appetites for sickeners or conjurers or fungi smelling of dead flesh and tasting of nothing when they're cooked. He feeds them disappointments, nightmares, fevers, indigestion, fear. He lets them breakfast on his spite.

The mushroom devil has been seen from time to time. Courting couples seeking privacy in some deep undergrowth have heard his foot snap stems behind them or sensed him creeping by their cars, a mocking voyeur, hoping to disrupt their love. Those midnight wanderers who search for mysteries and gods when all the bars have shut have told how he has come so close that he has stunned them with his breath. He shows himself to children, too. They run out of the woods and fields, their punnets empty, their bikes abandoned, with the devil at their tails.

Those foolish ones who stand and stare report his backing gait, his clumsiness. He has the odors of a kennel, plus boiled eggs, scorched hair, and sweat, they say. They cannot capture him. He will not talk or give his name. He slips away, enveloped by the unresisting darkness. But first he holds his open sack so they can see and smell the rootless puffballs and the chanterelles, the honey funguses, the magic heads, the cèpes, the shagcaps, boletes, morels, the inky dicks, which he will push that night into the earth like unconvincing garden ornaments.

Sometimes they see only his stooping back and watch his white hands coming from his sack.

I, too, have met the devil in the woods. I, too, have seen the mushrooms in his bag, lolling like eviscerated parts, meringues of human tissue, sweetbreads, smelling of placenta and decay. To tell the truth, these mushrooms baffle me. I've eaten them in many of their forms, I've tried the best, but always I am bored by them. The moment that you take them from the earth, they're dull. The moment that you place them in your mouth, they let you down. I've always thought they were expensive and absurd. If they've been planted by the devil, then he is making fun of us.

So I was curious when he and I crossed paths. I followed him. He let me follow him, for he is not afraid of us. He turned his back on me and didn't care. I watched his antics in the night. I watched his white hands and his sack. And I can tell you: he has fooled you yet again. The devil is not emptying his sack but filling it. He does not plant. He picks, he picks, he picks. That's why his back is bent. He is the one who wants the mushrooms for himself. His greed is stronger than his spite. He thinks the mushrooms are too good for us. We'd not appreciate the poisons or the tangs that they provide, their blasphemies. We are too dull and timid for the magic and the flesh. He roams the woods and meadows when it's dark to satisfy himself. He knows which mushrooms to pull up. The ones he leaves for us are flavorless.

ASHES AND SPICE

She'd heard an actor talking on the radio. He loved his cat. So when it died, he had the animal cremated and put its ashes in an airtight pot on the condiment-and-spices shelf. He'd add a tiny pinch of ash each time he made a soup or stew or cup of instant coffee. The ashes lasted him three months. They didn't seem to spoil the taste of anything. But it was comforting to have the cat inside, recycled as it were, and purring for eternity. He recommended it for anyone with pets.

When her husband died, she took the actor's route. Cremated him and potted him and put a pinch of him into her meals, like grainy, unbleached salt. She judged that the flavor of these meals suffered slightly from his ashes, to tell the truth. Or maybe that was just a widow's queasiness. But certainly the comfort that she felt was less than she had counted on. She did not feel possessed by him. She did not feel at peace, as she had hoped. She was not reconciled to her new solitude. Instead, a small voice piped inside her stomach as she lay in bed at night. It bothered her. Her husband's singing voice, high-pitched and watery. The lyrics were not clear, but then they never had been clear when he was living. No matter what she did, he would not stop. His singing would not let her sleep.

The doctor listened with his stethoscope. He hummed the tune and tried to put a name to it. He took his patient's temperature. "This sort of thing is common," he said. "I've heard all kinds of songs from widows of your generation. There's not a medicine to fix it. But I'll say to you exactly what I've told the other women: You can't eat grief. It's far too strong, and indigestible. You have to let the grief eat you. You have to let the sorrow swallow you. Then put his ashes in the earth and let him go. Come back and see me in a month or two. By then, I bet, your husband's voice will be only a memory and you'll be happy with the quieter life that you have earned by loving him."

BOYSIE TART

It's said that cheese is milk that's grown up, fresh milk transformed by time. If so, then what is boysie tart? A senile dish, turned bitter by the years? It's made from old blue cheese, matured—ignored—enough to be hard and slippery as a horse's hoof.

The cheese is difficult, too gnarled to cut easily. You can only chisel and pare it into hard slivers, the Devil's nail clippings. It won't be edible until you've baked it with sultanas, prunes, and well-hung game—a scrub-fowl's best—in a sourdough case. Old cheese, old fruit, old yeast, old meat. All carcasses. For New Year's Eve, the last meal of the dying year.

If you've an orange that's gone hard and turned to parchment, squeeze what reasty juice remains onto the tart. Then dine the old year out, with timid forks, with ancient friends. This is the taste of those dishonored resolutions that have left their pungent marks throughout the house, those perfidies that have the gift of aging cheese and souring yeast and shrivelling the plums and grapes and putrefying meat.

Tomorrow is another year. Fresh milk. ♦

ORGANIZATIONS WE'D LIKE TO JOIN DEPT.
From the Arab Times.

The Filipino Writers Guild in Kuwait (FWGK) would like to congratulate Ed Santos Oliveros who has been accepted recently as member by the PEN (Pets, Essayists, and Novelists), an international organisation of literary writers, journalists, and editors.

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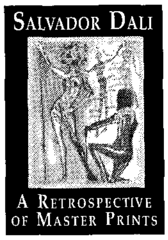

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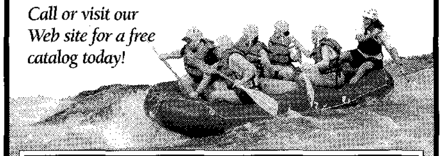

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THE CRITICS

THE THEATRE

GOLD RUSH

Mel Brooks is back, mit a bing, mit a bang, mit a boom.

BY JOHN LAHR

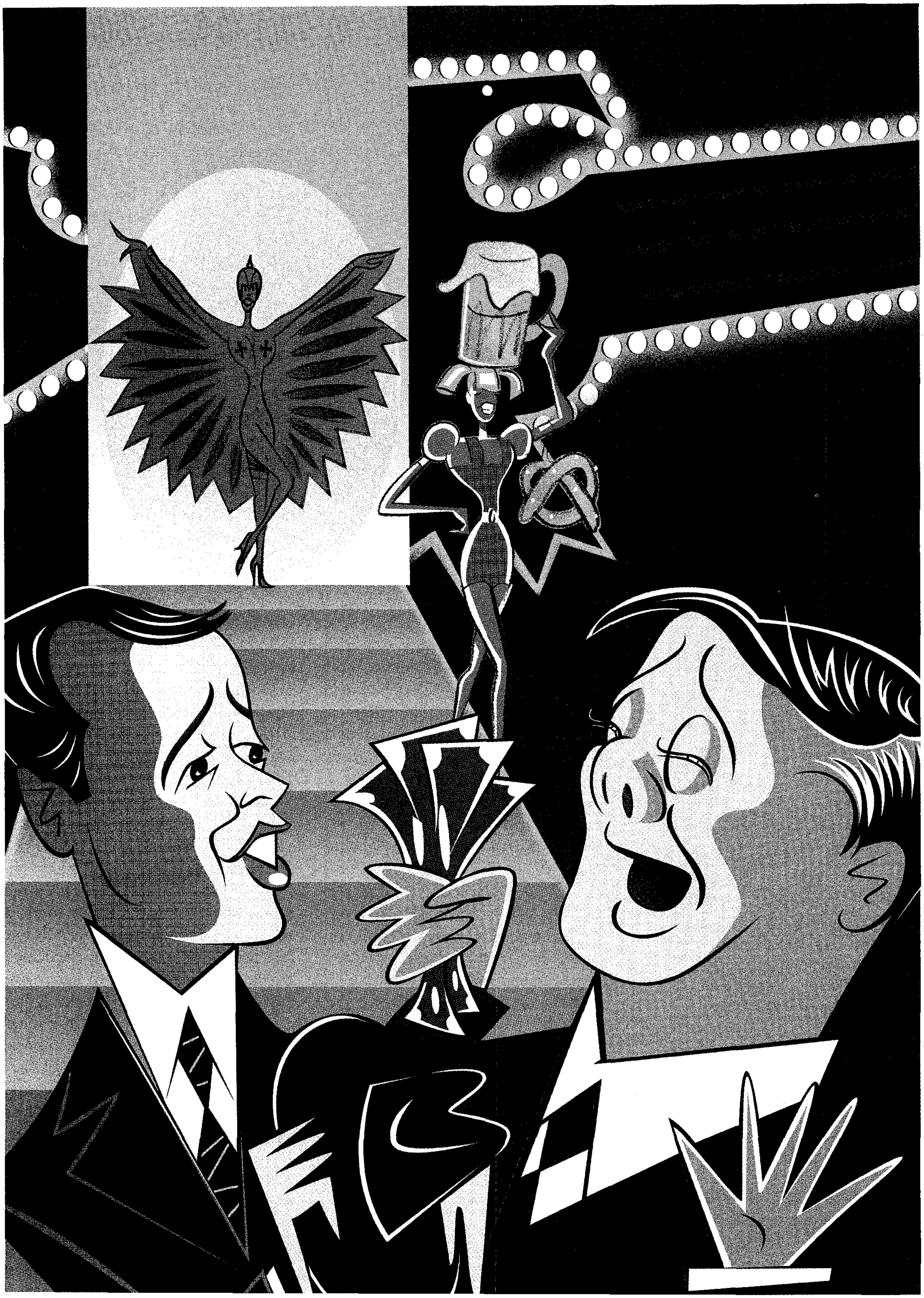
Mel Brooks, who is seventy-four and a tummler of note, once said, "I went into show business to make a noise, to *pronounce myself.* I want to go on making the loudest noise to the most people." The reckless abandon of his manic shtick is preserved on records—he is the incomparable Two-Thousand-Year-Old Man (Joan of Arc: "Know her? I went with her!")—and in films ("Young Frankenstein" and "Blazing Saddles" among them). But "The Producers" (at the St. James), the new Broadway version of the 1968 movie that Brooks wrote and directed, tops his lifetime of tumult. After opening night, in the spirit of the craven avidity that characterizes Brooks's fictional producers, Max Bialystock and Leo Bloom, the show's real producers hiked the ticket price to an all-time Broadway high of a hundred dollars, added two computers to the theatre's lobby, and commandeered two more box offices at the Shubert theatres across from the St. James to accommodate overflow business. The Tele-charge lines were jammed; and, among Broadway swamis, all of this was a sure sign that a gusher—so rare in recent years—had been struck. On the day after it opened, "The Producers" sold thirty-three thousand five hundred and ninety-eight tickets, taking in a total of $3,029,197 (it will recoup its eleven-million-dollar investment—almost twelve times the cost of the movie—in thirty-six weeks); these are the biggest numbers ever in the history of Broadway. (One person, who tried to beg a ticket for a friend dying of cancer, was told by the producer, Rocco Landesman, "That's not good enough.") At a stroke, the diminutive Brooks—"the little maestro," Kenneth Tynan called him—has turned into the Ponce de León of commercial theatre. He has found the secret that Broadway feared it would never find again: not money (there are plenty of spondulicks around) but joy.

Brooks is a licensed zany. The paying customers know that he has the comic goods, and they giggle excitedly as the curtain goes up—even before there is anything remotely funny onstage—like virgins about to be bedded by a rampant old pro. What's first-rate about this particular seduction is not the lyrics or the music or the choreography but Brooks's antic imagination and the atmosphere of audacious liberty with which he whips up both the audience and his collaborators. In "The Producers," Nazi pigeons "*Sieg heil!*," dirty old ladies dance with their walkers, and, with the song "Springtime for Hitler," Brooks offers the goofiest production number since Jewish refugees danced over barbed wire in the musical version of "Exodus"—they really did! Here, Brooks turns atrocity into travesty, with a fabulous high-kicking chorus in swastika formation singing to "ev'ry hotsy-totsy Nazi" and with parading showgirls doing their Ziegfeld strut while balancing behemoth beer steins, pretzels, and bratwursts on their heads. In this high-camp heaven, expertly staged by Susan Stroman, Brooks somehow also manages to satirize the shallowness and moral exhaustion of a world that he can't help loving in all its clapped-out vulgarity. In the process, and for the first time in about forty years, Brooks has, however inadvertently, asserted the authority of the comedian as the engine behind the Broadway musical. This is good news for a vivacious theatrical form, which for a generation has been hijacked by the forces of high art and lumbered with more heavy intellectual furniture than it can carry.

After "Oklahoma!" (1943) raised the hegemony of the musical's score and book over the idiosyncratic high jinks of its comedians, the genre became increasingly sophisticated and artistically ambitious; "musical comedy" became "the musical." Humor, if there was any, was relegated to the subplot or to an eleven-o'clock number. By the late sixties, when Brooks wrote "The Producers," the comedians who had made the musical the great noisy, democratic, popular art form it had been into the mid-fifties were either dead or more or less out to pasture. Vietnam had put paid to the musical's thematic stock-in-trade: optimism, innocence, and abundance. Broadway was left with nothing to sing about and no way to incorporate the culture's sense of collapse. "The Producers"—in which two scoundrels try to bilk their investors by staging a surefire failure, entitled "Springtime for Hitler," which turns out to be so bad that it becomes a hit and thereby scuppers their larcenous dreams—was Brooks's effort to marry the enchantment of the old form with society's newfound mood of mockery and disenchantment. Stephen Sondheim's "Company" was still two years away. Now, more than thirty years later, Sondheim's deconstructed musicals are the state of the art, and Brooks has brought back to Broadway, in a well-written libretto, that old formula of "no girls, no gags, no chance." Both as a narrative and as a spectacle, the stage version of "The Producers" is far superior to the movie—which, in itself, is another Broadway first.

With the help of his deft and witty co-author, Thomas Meehan, a playwright and a former *New Yorker* humorist, who hit his first mother lode as the author of "Annie," Brooks reins in his compulsion to tell four jokes where one will do, and the jokes he does tell almost always hit their mark. Brooks and Meehan give the story a proper ending, which it didn't have in the movie, and also provide Leo Bloom (the excellent Matthew

TOP: KOREN, 1/20/68; OPPOSITE: ROBERT RISKO



In Brooks's high-camp heaven, showgirls dance with beer steins and a chorus in swastika formation sings of "hotsy-totsy" Nazis.

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Broderick), the hapless accountant who accidentally hits upon Bialystock's scam, with both a love interest and a compelling reason for joining forces with the con man—he has always dreamed of being in theatre. Or, as Brooks, who wrote both the music and the lyrics, so piquantly has Bloom sing, "I just gotta be a producer / Drink champagne until I puke." In general, Brooks's lyrics are formulaic; but when they abandon any attempt at articulacy and revel in Yiddish folderol they are sublime. For instance, when the helmeted Nazi author of "Springtime," Franz Liebkind (well played by Brad Oscar), interrupts a fey audition rendition of "Haben Sie Gehört das Deutsche Band?" to show the assembled how the macho Führer really sang, he breaks into a Jolson hard sell, all elbows and wonderful, dopey sound: "Mit a bang / Mit a boom / Mit a bing-bang bing-bang boom! / . . . Mit a zetz, mit a zap, mit a zing." Brooks, who pays sidesplitting homage to Judy Garland when the play's director turned Hitler (Gary Beach, having a field day) sits on the edge of the stage mouthing "I love you," also pays homage to himself: in the middle of "Springtime," a storm trooper lip-synchs to Brooks's smoky Brooklyn voice, saying, "Don't be stupid, be a smarty, come and join the Nazi party!" Brooks likes nothing more than to push a stereotype to such an extreme that the lie behind it becomes hilarious. In the conformist hell of Leo Bloom's accounting firm—given a light, Expressionist touch by Robin Wagner's design—a black accountant with a deep bass voice suddenly breaks into Leo's litany of woe: "Oh I debits all de mornin' / An' I credits all de eb'nin' / Until dem ledgers be rightttt." This left-field approach also applies to the dialogue. At one point, when the zaftig blond Swedish bimbo secretary (the effective Cady Huffman) brushes up against Leo and he moves away sharpish, she asks, "Vhy Bloom go so far downstage right?"

The performing centerpiece of the show is Nathan Lane, as the flamboyant huckster Bialystock, who, when he's not producing shows like "The Breaking Wind" or "The Kidney Stone" and its sequel, "This Too Shall Pass," is seducing old ladies for their little "checkees," which are always made out to a show called "Cash." "Please, let's play one game with absolutely no sex," the exhausted Bialystock says to one rapacious old biddy. "Let's play the Jewish Princess and her husband." Lane is expert at delivering these tart wisecracks, and he has an astute sense of timing that pays off best in caterwauling song—for instance, when he takes up residence under a ladder, breaks a mirror, and throws a black cat around by the tail to invoke bad luck. He's a noisy, comic whirlwind, and he works well against Broderick's cunning, droll underplaying. As good as he is, Lane can't quite find the oily desperation that Zero Mostel brought to the film role or escape the shadow of Mostel's comic genius. Empty vessels make the most noise; and even when he's knockin' 'em dead, shouting his gonif wisdom into Bloom's ear—"NEVER PUT YOUR OWN MONEY IN THE SHOW!"—there's something undefined in Lane, whose bravado, unlike Brooks's, seems to mask rather than reveal. Nonetheless, Lane's kind of high-amperage panache is in limited supply these days, and both he and Broderick deliver the mail. In that, there is gallantry as well as grace.

As a foot soldier tromping through Germany at the end of the Second World War, Brooks was the platoon cutup; he sang all the time and was never one to brood about the dead bodies around him, or the prospect of becoming one of them. In a *New Yorker* Profile in the late seventies, he mentioned to Kenneth Tynan that he used to tell the troops, "Nobody dies—it's all made up." He explained, "Otherwise we'd all get hysterical, and that kind of hysteria—it's not like sinking, it's like slowly taking on water, and that's the panic. Death is the enemy of everyone . . . death is more of an enemy than a German soldier." If our President won't sign up for the Kyoto agreement to protect the atmosphere, we can still sign up for the Brooks agreement, which is sure to protect our inner environment. The pact goes like this: We are polluted by grief and greed; let's acknowledge it, defy it, meet the inevitable vulgar annihilation with careless vulgar rapture, and, with the last measure of our energy and imagination, refuse darkness its dominion. That is the comic's bargain with the public. Laughter makes you light-headed, but it also brings light. It's intoxicating. It works. I've signed on; and I can say without fear of contradiction that there are millions of other heartbroken souls in line right behind me. ♦

BOOKS

TOTE THAT EPHEMERA

An ambitious new novel from a gifted writer.

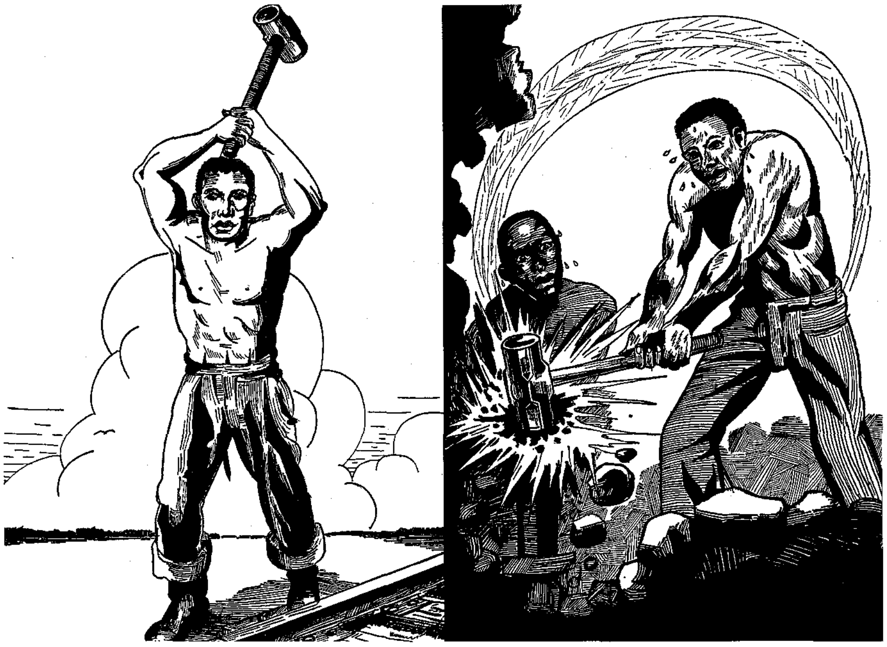
BY JOHN UPDIKE

The young African-American writer to watch may well be a thirty-one-year-old Harvard graduate with the vivid name of Colson Whitehead. His first novel, "The Intuitionist," came out in 1999 and won a flock of fledgling honors: *Esquire* named it the best first novel of the year, *GQ* anointed it one of the best books of the millennium, the Quality Paperback Book Club gave it the New Voices Award. It was a strikingly original and polished début, concerning the travails of Lila Mae Watson, the first black woman elevator inspector in a city that was not quite New York, in the way that Batman's Gotham isn't quite. The novel seizes upon an unsung wonder in our midst, the elevator, and sings its history, its technology, its romance, adding to the novelist's solid research a scintillating pinch of sci-fi fantasy.

The extensive guild of metropolitan elevator inspectors is split, it would seem, between the Empiricists, who plod through their inspections one material criterion at a time, and the Intuitionists, who take a more mystical, gestalt approach to the detection of safety flaws. The latter are disciples of James Fulton, the author of "Theoretical Elevators" and other advanced works in liftology; he turns out, in the novel's cheerful convolutions, to have been a black man, and his search for the perfect, shaftless elevator had something to do, it seems allegorically evident, with rising clear of racist America's structures. Whitehead unfolds his raddled undercity with the terse poetry and numinous dignity of the early Malamud. The prose is a gas, bubbly, clean, often funny in its bursts of mock-mandarin social exposition:

> The spa failed after newer spas opened in the weatherless regions of the Southwest. Weatherlessness is much more amenable to those in search of succor for bodily complaint, evoking timelessness and immortality, and soon the rich neurasthenic women from the Northeast's larger cities boarded planes to be free of the seasons and the proximity of their braying families, the cause of their disrepair.

Whitehead can try too hard ("Thick black mustaches shrub beneath their nostrils, intrepid vegetation on petrous faces"), but generally his writing does what writing should do; it refreshes our sense of the world, as when the hissing of steam heat is described as "sonic adipose" and a pedestrian's eyes greet "the steel-eyed cop on the corner with the sun in his buttons."



The central event in "John Henry Days" is a celebration of the mythic black hero.

ROY LA GRONE

This blithely gifted writer's second novel, "John Henry Days" (Doubleday; $24.95), is longer and more various, and also slacker and more diffuse. His hip wit sits on the narrative less as delicious icing than as a nervous burden; self-consciousness threatens to block every simple feeling. In his dense weave of cultural reference he mentions a successful first novelist whose "second novel, recapitulating some of the first's themes, [is] somehow lacking—emboldened by success he tries to tackle too much." Whitehead's own first novel comes up for a parodic allusion: "It's about two warring groups of chiropodists. One group does it the natural way, looking for fungus and corns, and the other—" With the serial ingenuity of "Ulysses," a medley of voices and short scenes in a virtuosic variety of styles seeks to encompass a mighty but elusive subject. The author's instinct for the epic has led him to the mythic black hero John Henry, who in the novel's central event is being honored, on the weekend of July 12, 1996, with a three-day celebration in Talcott, West Virginia. Talcott is the site of the Big Bend Tunnel, a railroad tunnel where, purportedly, around 1870, the fabulously strong steel driver challenged a steam drill to a race and won, though his heart gave out afterward. John Henry and three other American legends—Paul Bunyan, Mighty Casey, and Pecos Bill—are being recognized with an ethnically balanced quartet of Folk Heroes stamps issued by the United States Postal Service, and our novel's hero, J. (a mystery initial) Sutter, a roving black journalist and writer on pop culture, has come to the little mountain town on a junket. He is engaged in a feat of his own: he is attempting to break the record of a fabled earlier junketee, Bobby Figgis, who attended publicity parties continuously for nine months before disappearing, "devoured by pop." J. is on his third

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month, "a three-month junket jag he is too unwilling or too scared to break."

The guild of freeloading, ephemera-writing junketeers lacks the municipal muscle and dark plunge-potential of the elevator-inspector crowd, but it has its rites and solidarity. Present for the festivities in Talcott are the veteran Dave Brown, whose "byline is a roach whose gradual infestation of the world's print media can only be sketchily documented"; One Eye, who lost his other orb to some gesturing fingers while thirstily lunging at the open bar of a Manhattan venue; Frenchie, a fashion expert with a stalled book ("If he wanted sympathy he should have never written those Talk of the Towns for the *New Yorker*, a sure friendship-killer in the freelance world"); J.; and Tiny, a leviathan grown great on gratis hors d'œuvres:

> At three hundred pounds, the man is hunger, gorging and grazing at the free spreads of life. If any person deserves to be on the List, it is Tiny, a creature who has evolved into the perfect mooching machine, leaving no glass undrained or napkin unstained by chicken skewer residue. He sucks up freebies in a banquet room like a baleen whale inhaling colonies of hapless plankton, swooping primeval and perfect, eyelids blinking slowly in the unlit fathoms of media. The dirigible prowls the food and travel magazine circuit; as a party trick he has been known to throw darts at a map of the world and name a princely dish native to that region, belching up its flavor on command, an archival gust from deep in his belly.

Also present is Pamela Street, whose father collected John Henry memorabilia and created a sorely neglected John Henry Museum in Harlem. Now that he is dead, the town of Talcott has offered to buy the collection, and she is checking the place out. Like J., she is black, and their guarded attraction to one another furnishes the novel's romantic interest and its main, rather meagrely fuelled engine of suspense. A catastrophe during the John Henry Days is early foretold and hovers promisingly in the reader's mind, but the narrative supplies so many foci, so many momentary scenes and diversionary points of interest, that attention skids and stalls. In "The Intuitionist," Whitehead employed a trick of jumping back and forth in the time sequence, but the plot never wandered far from Lila Mae and the theme of elevators. In this novel, the apparently mighty theme of John Henry, though attacked from every angle, refuses to yield a unifying resonance that would incorporate J. Sutter and his very contemporary predicament, that of a talent lost in "the brittle domain of irony" and selling itself short in cranking out promotion pieces.

The brief scenes bodying forth the epic black laborer and his tunnelling cohorts are tours de force; the extensive treatment of J. Sutter's demimonde of publicity jaunts on the culture beat has considerable satiric energy; and the six or so imaginings of the legend of John Henry as it touched past lives (at the turn of the century, a young Jewish song plugger decides to launch himself as a composer with his version of the ballad; decades later, an itinerant black bluesman called Moses records his version in Chicago; in the thirties, two academic folklorists, one white and one black, search the vicinity of Talcott for living witnesses to the contest of 1870; in 1940, Paul Robeson struggles through the failing musical "John Henry," based on a 1931 novel by Roark Bradford; just after the Second World War, a small girl whom we take to be J. Sutter's mother, a child of the middle class on Strivers Row in Harlem, encounters the ballad's sheet music and is scolded for playing it on the piano, her mother calling it music for "good-for-nothing niggers who don't care about making a better life for themselves") are all lively. These diverse episodes, however, seem beads on a string or, more aptly, cars in a long train dragging its length up a mountain slope.

The book takes its name from John Henry, epitome of black strength and heartbreak, but its central character, the disgusted junketeer J. Sutter, need not be black at all. His discontent might just as well be that of a young white or Asian-American of literary bent. J.'s educational advantages and his relatively race-blind milieu of pop culture deprive him of the claim that black characters, from the slave narratives on, traditionally exert upon the American conscience: the heroism that persecution and disadvantage impose. With comfortable assurance Whitehead evokes the particulars of past racial oppression: John Henry, not ten years after Emancipation, working like a slave for white contractors; the singer Moses making his wary, hungover way to the white man's recording studio; Guy, the black academic, being rebuffed by his surprised white correspondent when he appears in person—"I don't know where you got that, but I don't have nothing to say about that letter, boy." J. himself, venturing South with Mississippi in his mind and apprehensively mixing in the small-town scene, encounters no overt racial slights and finds "more black people than he expected; he's doing a lot of the old afro-nod, the hello you give to folks when you get out of the city and into friendlier climes."

For the J. Sutters of the Republic, the prophetic thunders and righteous wrath of Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois and Richard Wright and James Baldwin have dwindled to the mumbling ambivalences of freedom in a money-driven, publicity-mad consumer society. A metropolitan book party throngs into J.'s memory, and its panorama of up-to-date types includes this vignette: "The biracial who adopted a superficial militancy to overcompensate for light skin discussed the perfidy of ice people with the gangster rapper ashamed of a placid upbringing in a middle-class suburb." As assimilation and integration achieve their dilutions and ironies, what remains worth fighting for? How does a black man save his soul? Fortunate black citizens are now privileged to share the moral inconsequence of the entire society; this is progress of a sort, but not necessarily aesthetic progress. In "John Henry Days," the sepia mood has produced an ambitious, finely chiselled work frustratingly vague in its resolution. At the end, the novel falls into the jackhammer prose of old newsreel voice-overs, and delivers what is either the best-disguised happy ending or the most muffled tragic note of the publishing season. J. stands there "as if choices are possible" but says nothing. Well, if choices aren't possible, why is he taking up space in the middle of a work of fiction? The novel's nominal hero decided to battle a machine and won, losing his life in the process. J. has his qualities, but he's no John Henry. ♦

From the Fayetteville (Ark.) Northwest Arkansas Times.

Byron contends Argus' planned removal of the trees will kill several red-tailed hawks that are nesting in the grove in violation of the Federal Migratory Bird Act.

John Ashcroft take note.

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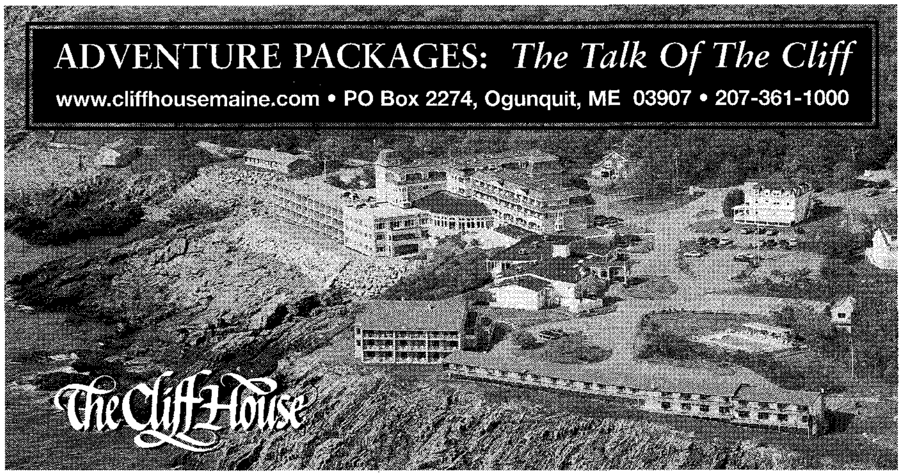

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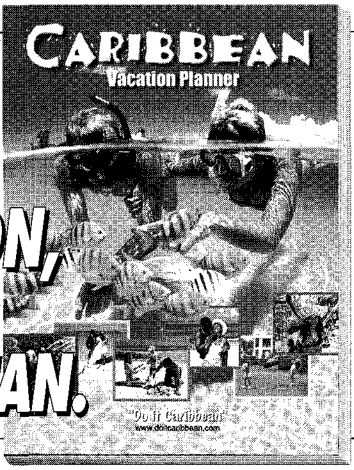

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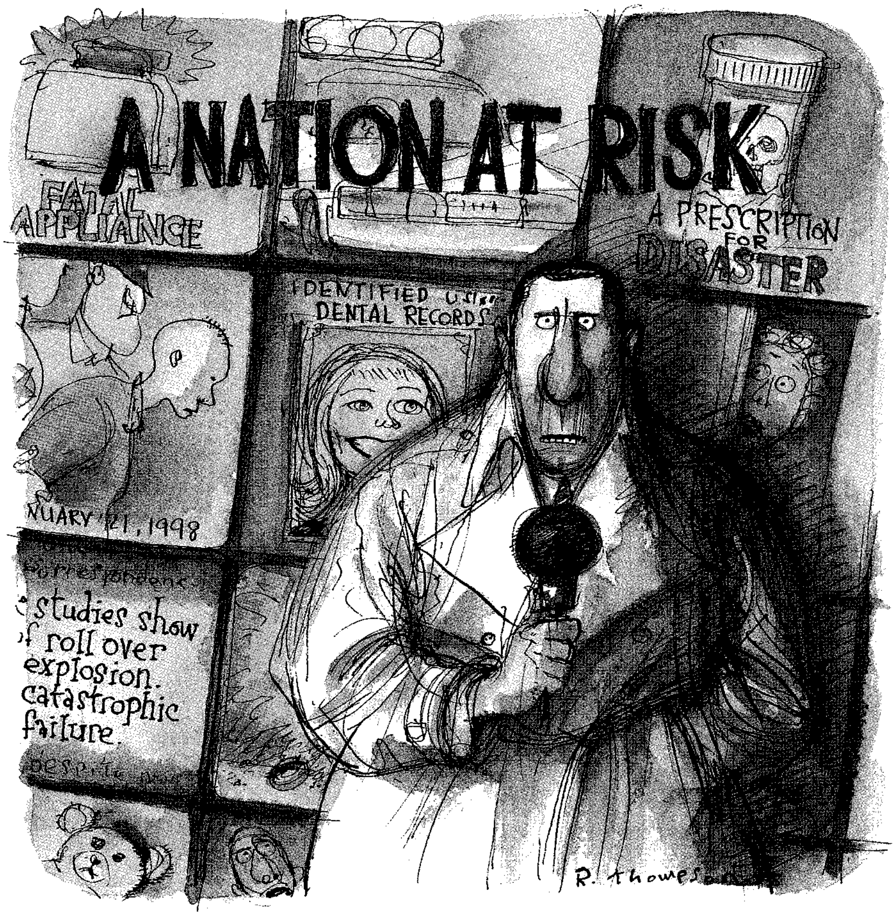
DEAD AIR

Don Hewitt and TV's news-magazine menace.

BY TAD FRIEND


A NATION AT RISK
FATAL APPLIANCE
A PRESCRIPTION FOR DISASTER
IDENTIFIED USING DENTAL RECORDS
NUARY 21, 1998
Studies show roll over explosion. catastrophic failure
R. Thompson

"60 Minutes" copycats allow networks to fill airtime at relatively little expense.

To the frustrated channel surfer, it often seems that there is only one show on television, "Dateline NBC: 48 Hours of 20/20, PrimeTime Thursday," and that this show endlessly repeats one basic story: The Thing That Went Horribly Wrong. In the codified news-magazine vernacular, what kind of thing went horribly wrong becomes instantly clear.

If it was a consumer product, you get something like the following: "Little did they know that a pepper grinder . . . *could kill!*"; an old photo of a young girl eating, her mother saying, "Mary always loved pepper"; a montage of an out-of-focus ambulance weaving through traffic, an I.V. drip, and a flatlining heart monitor; shoppers browsing for appliances as we pan down to the correspondent, who says, "Could it happen . . . in *your kitchen*?"; a shot of a document, then a snippet enlarged against it (". . . failed to meet safety standards . . ."); an expert who is identified in voice-over as his hands tap at a keyboard, and who is then asked, "Just how dangerous are these condiment-delivery devices?" "*Profoundly* dangerous, Bob"; an empty playground swing rocking gently.

If it was boy-meets-girl that went bad, you get: "Tom was everyone's favorite neighbor"; snapshots of a smiling young woman with her fiancé or cheerleading squad; "Mary had everything to live for"; "But he had a secret he couldn't tell anyone"; "Little did she know her sunny world was about to go dark"; a shaky black-and-white reënactment of someone moving down a shadowy corridor, a door opening, the camera spinning as if slugged; closeup of a phone as we hear the 911 tape; Tom in a jumpsuit and manacles in court; the slow push in on Mary's grave; the correspondent's back-and-forth with the anchor in the studio, which goes, "We'd like to trust our neighbors, but sometimes trust can kill." "Sobering words, Bob. Thanks!"

In a new memoir, "Tell Me a Story: Fifty Years and 60 Minutes in Television" (Public Affairs; $26), Don Hewitt acknowledges that news magazines themselves have gone horribly wrong, and essentially apologizes for having fathered the form when he created "60 Minutes," in 1968. Hewitt is justifiably proud of "60 Minutes," which he is still in charge of; it has won sixty-eight Emmys and is the longest continuously running prime-time program ever. But he deplores his followers' shows as "promotable nonsense." He once said, "We ruined television, because we made it profitable to do this kind of thing." And it's true that by earning so much money for CBS—some two billion dollars, all told—"60 Minutes" fundamentally changed television news. News was traditionally a loss leader, a public service that the networks provided to justify their huge profits from shows like "Gilligan's Island." Then, in the nineteen-eighties, the networks realized that "60 Minutes" was not only a Top Ten show but also cost much less to produce than an hour of entertainment. So they started spackling the holes in their schedules with "60 Minutes" knockoffs. As Hewitt writes, "Behind every television newsmagazine there's a failed sitcom."

How did news magazines become so tendentious, sapless, nervous, and null? Imitation remains the sincerest form of television, but those who copy "60 Minutes" always try to update it, to create even better TV. That's where they go wrong. Strange as it sounds, the reason viewers love "60 Minutes" has little to do with its being a TV show.

Don Hewitt didn't ruin television—get in line, buster—but with "Tell Me a Story" he isn't doing publishing any favors. Walter Cronkite once remarked that Hewitt has a "pogo stick reaction" to the news, and readers of this jumpy, slapdash book may begin to won-

RICHARD THOMPSON

der how "60 Minutes" ever stayed the course under his leadership. An early supporter of Ross Perot's bizarro Presidential run, Hewitt once tried to enlist a group of stars, including Mike Wallace and Dan Rather, to buy CBS News and broadcast it from a satellite dish atop the Potamkin Cadillac dealership across the street.

Hewitt joined CBS in its infancy, in 1948, and was swept away by the bustle and glamour of the studio:

> As a child of the movies, I was torn between wanting to be Julian Marsh, the Broadway producer in "42nd Street," who was up to his ass in showgirls, and Hildy Johnson, the hellbent-for-leather reporter in "The Front Page," who was up to his ass in news stories. Oh my God, I thought, in television, I could be *both* of them.

Hewitt quickly rose to become the producer-director of the "CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite," but he seems to have spent most of those early years cowboying around: impersonating sheriffs, stealing NBC's remote truck, and, for all we know, putting goldfish in Bill Paley's pool. His prose bounds toward punch lines that must have convulsed many a bar buddy: "It's these damned Limey bulbs!"; " 'Television?' he said. 'That's a fad. It won't last' "; " 'Gor, blimey,' he said, 'it's never done that before.' " Gor, blimey? As a narrator, Hewitt does not inspire confidence (unless you take it as a sign of reliability that many of his stories also appear, word for word, in his 1985 book, "Minute by Minute . . ."). His explanation of why "60 Minutes" finally hired a female correspondent, Diane Sawyer, in 1984, is equal parts indignation and incoherence:

> That she was great-looking everybody knew. That she was a great reporter we all surmised but weren't sure of until she proved it on "60 Minutes."
>
> One argument I didn't accept was the one that said it was time to put a woman on "60 Minutes." Baloney. It was time to put Diane Sawyer on "60 Minutes"—as far as I was concerned, she could have been named Tom Sawyer. Gender didn't have a damn thing to do with it.

Right. And what are we to make of his remedies for American politics? "The First Amendment has never kept anyone from refusing to broadcast or print obscenities," he writes, "and I contend that political commercials are often just that—obscenities—and should be banned for that reason alone." Networks would recoup the lost revenue by airing liquor ads: "Let's face it, Jack Daniels and Jim Beam, in my eyes, did a hell of a lot less harm to America than Dick Morris." This sort of thing at least explains why Hewitt allows Andy Rooney to close "60 Minutes" with his own brand of flapdoodle.

Inside the control room, however, Don Hewitt is a wizard. He originated the chyron—the superimposed type that identifies the person onscreen—and popularized the two-camera interview, which allows us to see the correspondent's interview behavior in real time. (When a news-magazine crew has only one camera, as is sometimes the case on foreign stories, the correspondent's questions and thoughtful nods are taped afterward.)

Hewitt also has an instinctively populist feel. When he created "60 Minutes," thirty-three years ago, he was in exile at CBS, laboring on "holier-than-thou documentaries that no one watched." Eager to get back in the game, he pictured his new show as a television version of *Life*, which mixed photos of cuddly puppies and leggy starlets with war reporting. Similarly, Hewitt realized that "we could look into Marilyn Monroe's closet so long as we looked into Robert Oppenheimer's laboratory, too."

The show's format has remained remarkably simple: no theme music, no fancy camerawork or exploding logos. A correspondent in a gray armchair introduces his story against the backdrop of an electronically created magazine spread, and off we go: three stories a week, edited "to a manageable twelve to fifteen minutes to deal with the viewers' attention span." This was a new story length for television, a pleasing middle distance between the ninety-second sprints of nightly news and the deadly marathons of documentaries.

Hewitt insists that "60 Minutes" is a news program. And, frequently, it has been: in recent months, the show has turned out excellent stories on police brutality in New York City and tensions in the Gaza Strip. But Hewitt's definition of news is not necessarily "advancing what is publicly known" or "finding the ultimate truth"; often it is simply "putting exciting people on camera." In 1998, a "60 Minutes" producer persuaded Kathleen Willey to tell her story: that President Clinton had fondled her breasts in the Oval Of-

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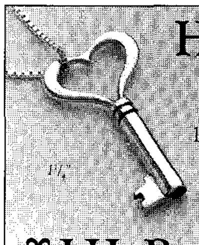

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fice. When Clinton's aides heard about it and wanted to respond, Hewitt told them that he would throw out the Willey interview if Clinton would come on camera for the whole hour. In other words, he'd let Clinton simply tell his side. (Clinton declined.) That's not great journalism, but it would have been great ratings.

Hewitt's regrettable legacy in this regard is that modern news magazines focus obsessively on "the get"—the first interview with a person of the moment, like Kato Kaelin or Monica Lewinsky. News is rarely got from the get. Everyone remembers Diane Sawyer—by then at ABC—doing headstands with Elián González and asking Marla Maples, in reference to Donald Trump, "Was it the best sex you ever had?" No one remembers Elián's musings on world affairs or Maples' evasive reply.

The get is about the correspondent's charisma and power, not the subject's views. Hewitt understood that the audience wanted the same thing that had drawn him to journalism in the first place: the movie version. In his case, this meant the boyhood sight of Joel McCrea playing a trenchcoat-wearing, pipe-puffing reporter in Hitchcock's "Foreign Correspondent." So he turned his correspondents into movie stars.

Other news magazines' stories are mostly "B roll" images, or "wallpaper"—the shots that "cover" the correspondent's narration (the pan across the empty courtroom; pill bottles clacking down a production line). "60 Minutes" stories are mostly "interview"—the correspondent and the subject(s), talking in extreme closeup. This love-scene technique increases intensity, and also coaxes us to grow fond of Ed Bradley's earring and craggy teeth, Morley Safer's seamed, Idaho-potato face, Lesley Stahl's fluctuating hair (Chico Marx in the studio, Harpo Marx on the road), and Mike Wallace's hussarlike bearing, his right arm braced on the chair wing as he listens to some miscreant, his left index finger cocked above his lip like a pistol. When we see Bradley naked in a Russian sauna in a story about Soviet nuclear weapons, or Tina Turner pulling Wallace onto her concert stage, the "story" is not being advanced, but our bond with the stars is. And that bond, in fact, is the story.

In casting Harry Reasoner and Mike Wallace as his original correspondents, Hewitt made news's first buddy film. "Good guy, bad guy," Hewitt writes. "The guy you love, the guy who makes you quake." The good guy makes us feel better about really wanting to see the bad guy. The trademark "60 Minutes" piece is a Mike Wallace "gotcha," involving malfeasance, hidden cameras, and an ambush interview. "Rick, what are you ashamed of?" Wallace asked in a 1994 piece, playing to the camera at a corrupt garage as the mechanics scattered. "Everyone's scuttling like cockroaches around here!" he added, with satisfaction. In "Minute by Minute . . ." Hewitt wrote that his ratings depend on the "'Madame Defarges' who bring their knitting to the television set to watch heads fall into the basket."

To achieve its effects, "60 Minutes" employs forty-four offscreen producers, who do most of the actual reporting. What we see is not news being unearthed—and a correspondent's spontaneous compassion or skepticism—but a reprise of what the producers already know. A former "60 Minutes" producer, Barry Lando, wrote in *Brill's Content* in 1998 that "the taped interviews are often pure shadow play," with the producers having written out not only the correspondent's questions but also the expected responses—down to when the sobs will start.

The show opens with a blank screen and a ticking stopwatch. Hewitt often edits with his back to the monitor, just listening. "If we can get the sound right, we can make the pictures work," he writes in "Tell Me a Story." A 1998 PBS documentary on Hewitt showed him repeatedly rewriting Mike Wallace's lead for a piece about Ecuador, taking a leaden, slanted intro and making it soar.

The show is masterly in its use of the human voice. When Wallace, in mahogany tones, inquired of Jimmy (The Weasel) Fratianno, "You were a good killer?," the answer could only be grateful: "I just had the talent to do things like that." When John Ehrlichman suggested that the White House aided the Watergate burglars for compassionate reasons, Wallace's interjection—"Compassionate!"—said it all. And "60 Minutes" also understands the uses of silence. When Steve Kroft asked Clint Eastwood about the children he'd had out of wedlock, Eastwood's slow burn—and Kroft's cocked head and raised eyebrow—made for a classic movie showdown.

Hewitt built "60 Minutes" from the borrowed iconography of the movies, print magazines, and radio. The latter-day news magazines, to their detriment, haven't replicated that combination. They haven't created trenchcoat stars like Wallace and Safer, because their biggest names so often stay in the studio. By churning out "news you can use" about fat, finance, and parenting, and Chicken Little traumas—heavy objects that can fall on you at Home Depot, for instance—these shows are closer to the down-market *Redbook* than to *Life*.

What the new news magazines rely on is the iconography of television. This means a lot of visual busyness: split screens; sepia dissolves; "cookie cutters" (which throw exciting shadows behind the interviewee, such as a louvered window or a vertical "slash"); and cranes that swoop to capture the correspondent's standup. A recent story on "20/20"—guy beats cancer three times, marries his nurse—was "teased" using a montage of a photo of the guy as a teen-age football player, which dissolved to a hospital corridor and racing feet, on which was superimposed a syringe and an I.V. drip, which dissolved to three photos of him superimposed on a "Cancer Center" sign and a flashing monitor, and then to the guy now, walking with his wife. This ingenious "layering" took only five seconds. It also made watching the piece moot, because it *was* the piece, in miniature. As ratings sink even further, the news magazines, worried that their eye candy isn't emotionally satisfying, try to pluck heartstrings with clichés and hype. A recent "PrimeTime Thursday" report on a baby born to a woman in a coma called the story "emotional and amazing," "full of astonishments," "a journey of discovery," "wonderful," "truly extraordinary," "amazing," "magical," "remarkable," and "almost unheard of."

A form that spins and twists to disguise its own emptiness—this is the definition of decadence. Meanwhile, Don Hewitt is seventy-eight years old and Mike Wallace is just turning eighty-three, yet "60 Minutes" continues its old-fashioned storytelling undiminished. It is a thing of wonder, a coelacanth from ancient days still swimming strongly through the modern world. Long may the stopwatch tick. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Silent Extras, *by Arnon Grunberg, translated from the Dutch by Sam Garrett (St. Martin's; $23.95).* Ewald, the narrator of this picaresque tale, is deeply concerned with fantasies that shouldn't come true (sex with animals and plants, suicide)—probably because he's the kind of twenty-five-year-old who's so full of appetite that he'll try anything. Along with his two oddball friends, Elvira, an actress, and Broccoli, a self-described genius, Ewald feels permanently on the fringes of a society in which "people with cultivated taste don't talk about money or sex." And yet Ewald and his friends are ambitious enough to want recognition from that society, and their careering course from Amsterdam to America becomes a moving attempt "to live genuinely under unreal circumstances."

The Disastrous Mrs. Weldon, *by Brian Thompson (Doubleday; $26).* Between 1883 and 1901, Georgina Weldon brought more than a hundred lawsuits before the English courts, often garnering more press than the Prime Minister. Most of these were revenge for defamation of character: against her husband, who tried to have her declared insane; her former lover, the composer Charles Gounod; and her shifting cast of hangers-on. This chatty biography recounts Weldon's sensational life, which included a vainglorious singing career and a protracted attempt to turn her home, Tavistock House, where Dickens once lived, into an orphanage. Her greatest legacy was to expose the gross unfairness of Britain's lunacy law, but Mrs. Weldon becomes so tiresome in these pages that it's hard not to sympathize with the impulse to put her away.

Aunt Rachel's Fur, *by Raymond Federman, translated from the French by the author and Patricia Privat-Standley (FC2; $13.95).* M. Namredef is a failed writer—and a failed American—who has returned home to Paris to confront his past, escape his lover, and publish his novel, "A Time of Noodles" (about a failed writer who survives on noodles for a year). But Namredef is also a liar and a literary provocateur, so who can tell what's true? Between Namredef's "playgiarism" and Federman's "auto-biograffiti," an eclectic and ribald novel emerges, of family strife, class conflict, and French Jewishness.

In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz, *by Michela Wrong (HarperCollins; $26).* Wrong, a British journalist, spent six years reporting on Africa, and she not only was present for the end of the Mobutu regime, in Zaire (now Congo), but benefitted from it, filching a fish knife during the looting of the Presidential palace. For most of this fascinating book, Wrong is more objective, offering a stinging portrait of the country's despair under Mobutu while reviewing its complex history. Rather than laying blame at the feet of either European colonialists or African tyrants, she suggests that the two groups coexist in a kind of depraved symbiosis, producing crippling poverty, corruption, and civil war.

Literature and the Gods, *by Roberto Calasso, translated from the Italian by Tim Parks (Knopf; $22).* Difficult are the gods for men to see, but Calasso spots them almost everywhere in literature, from their appearances in Greek and Hindu myth to their more complicated incarnations in German Romanticism, French Symbolism, and Nabokov. Calasso is interested in charting how literature named the gods and then took it upon itself to unname them—to transform Vishnu and Zeus into less material expressions of enchantment—and how those wily pagans, cast out and nameless, managed to sneak back into the literary imagination in new forms. The book strives more toward poetry than toward criticism; Calasso likes to go for the big, sweeping effect, and once in a while he can take your breath away.

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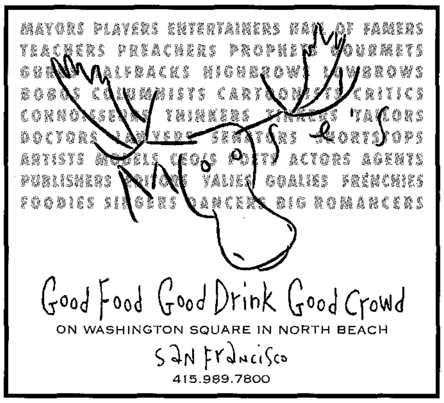
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DANCING

THE LOST NIJINSKY

Is it possible to reconstruct a forgotten ballet?

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Try a hypothetical. Beethoven's Fifth Symphony had its première in 1808 and was performed nine times. Then the theatre burned down and all copies of the score were destroyed. The composer never went back to it. Seventy years later, Beethoven is dead, and everyone laments the loss of this acclaimed composition. You are a music historian, and you decide to try to reconstruct the score. There are many small bits of evidence. You know the keys, the durations. You have some reviews. You have some sketches by Beethoven—for example, a four-note theme, three G's and an E-flat. You track down a few people who attended the première. They are very old, but they tell you whatever they can remember. You go back to your room, sit down at the piano, and try to piece the symphony together. The composition you produce—how close would it be to Beethoven's Fifth?

In the late seventies, Millicent Hodson, a doctoral candidate in dance history at Berkeley, set out, as part of her dissertation project, to reconstruct Nijinsky's "The Rite of Spring," which had its première with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris, in 1913. It was for this ballet that Stravinsky wrote his shattering score, and the action onstage was apparently no less a surprise. The spectators were shown an ancient Slavic tribe, at the beginning of spring, calling on their gods to renew the earth—a concession won, in the end, by human sacrifice. At the ballet's conclusion, a young girl danced herself to death. The choreography was aggressively antiballetic. The dancers stood hunched over, turned in. They shuddered; they stamped. In the words of Nijinsky's sister, Bronislava, they seemed "almost bestial."

The audience reacted on cue, producing Paris's most cherished theatrical riot. The police had to be called. If that wasn't enough to insure the ballet's notoriety, there was Nijinsky's personal story. He may have been the greatest ballet dancer of the last century. In any case, he was ballet's first modernist choreographer. In his twenties, he made a series of ballets that challenged academic dance as Picasso, around the same time, was challenging painting. Of those works, only the first, "The Afternoon of a Faun," is extant. A few months after the première of "The Rite of Spring," his third ballet, Nijinsky deserted Diaghilev (his lover) and married. Diaghilev fired him. Nijinsky went mad. In 1919, at the age of twenty-nine, he was diagnosed as schizophrenic, and he did not work—indeed, he rarely spoke—for the remaining thirty years of his life.

The score of "The Rite" survived, but the ballet, after nine performances in 1913, was never given again. People remembered it almost with fear. Jacques Rivière wrote that it analyzed human beings down to "germ layers, zones, circles, placentas." (Nijinsky said the same thing: "It is the life of the stones and the trees. There are no human beings in it.") It was hideous, Rivière said, and stupendous: it "alters the very source of all our aesthetic judgments."

Hodson had only little pieces of evidence, but she had lots of them. There were three backstage photos, together with a series of pencil sketches made by an artist in the audience. There was Stravinsky's rehearsal score, which noted entrances and exits, and also a score, marked by Nijinsky's assistant, that indicated certain movements, in broad terms ("They have arrived hopping," "They stop suddenly"). There were many surviving reviews, plus a letter from Bronislava Nijinska detailing, fifty-odd years after the fact, the death-dance of the sacrificial maiden. (That dance was set on her. Then she got pregnant and had to pull out of the ballet.) This was nowhere near enough to reconstruct a thirty-six-minute ballet that had a cast of forty-six dancers. Still, Hodson soldiered on, and eventually she acquired a partner: Kenneth Archer, an English art historian who was doing research on Nicholas Roerich, the Russian painter who designed "The Rite." Hodson and Archer combined their findings, got married, and went on working, she on the dance, he on the sets and costumes. In 1987, their "Rite of Spring" was given its première, in Los Angeles, by the Joffrey Ballet.

And it was a dud. Instead of looking like modernist primitivism—a dance that altered the very source of all our aesthetic judgments—it just looked like stage primitivism: tame, folkloric. Was this the effect of time? Had we seen too many Brian de Palma movies to be shocked by "The Rite of Spring"? Maybe, but if you look at "Nude Descending a Staircase" it still packs something of the punch that people felt when they first saw it at the Armory Show in 1913, the same year that "The Rite" premièred. By contrast, the Hodson-Archer "Rite" bore a distinct resemblance to "I'm an Indian, Too."

Hodson and Archer went on to reconstruct works by other choreographers, but they soon returned to Nijinsky. There were two other lost ballets by him: "Jeux" (1913) and "Till Eulenspiegel" (1916). According to some witnesses, these were his least successful efforts, and there was even less evidence for them than for "The Rite." No matter—Hodson and Archer went to work. Their version of "Till" was given its première by the Paris Opera Ballet in 1994; their "Jeux" by the Teatro Filarmonico of the Arena di Verona in 1996. Last month, these two productions, plus "The Rite," were given at the Rome Opera—the first time all three of the Hodson-Archer Nijinsky disinterments were shown on a single bill—and the "Jeux" and "Till" were such as to make you newly appreciative of "The Rite."

"Jeux" was Nijinsky's "tennis ballet." Three young people—a man (Nijinsky) and two women, all in tennis clothes—chase a ball into a clearing, and there, for eighteen minutes, they conduct a three-way flirtation. (The women are as taken with each other as they are with the man.) Then another tennis ball flies in, and they run off. As the surviving photographs show, the three dancers got themselves into some curious configurations, and their dancing combined straight ballet with sports maneuvers and a great deal of miscellaneous awkwardness, including fisted hands—"as one maimed from birth," said Nijinsky's

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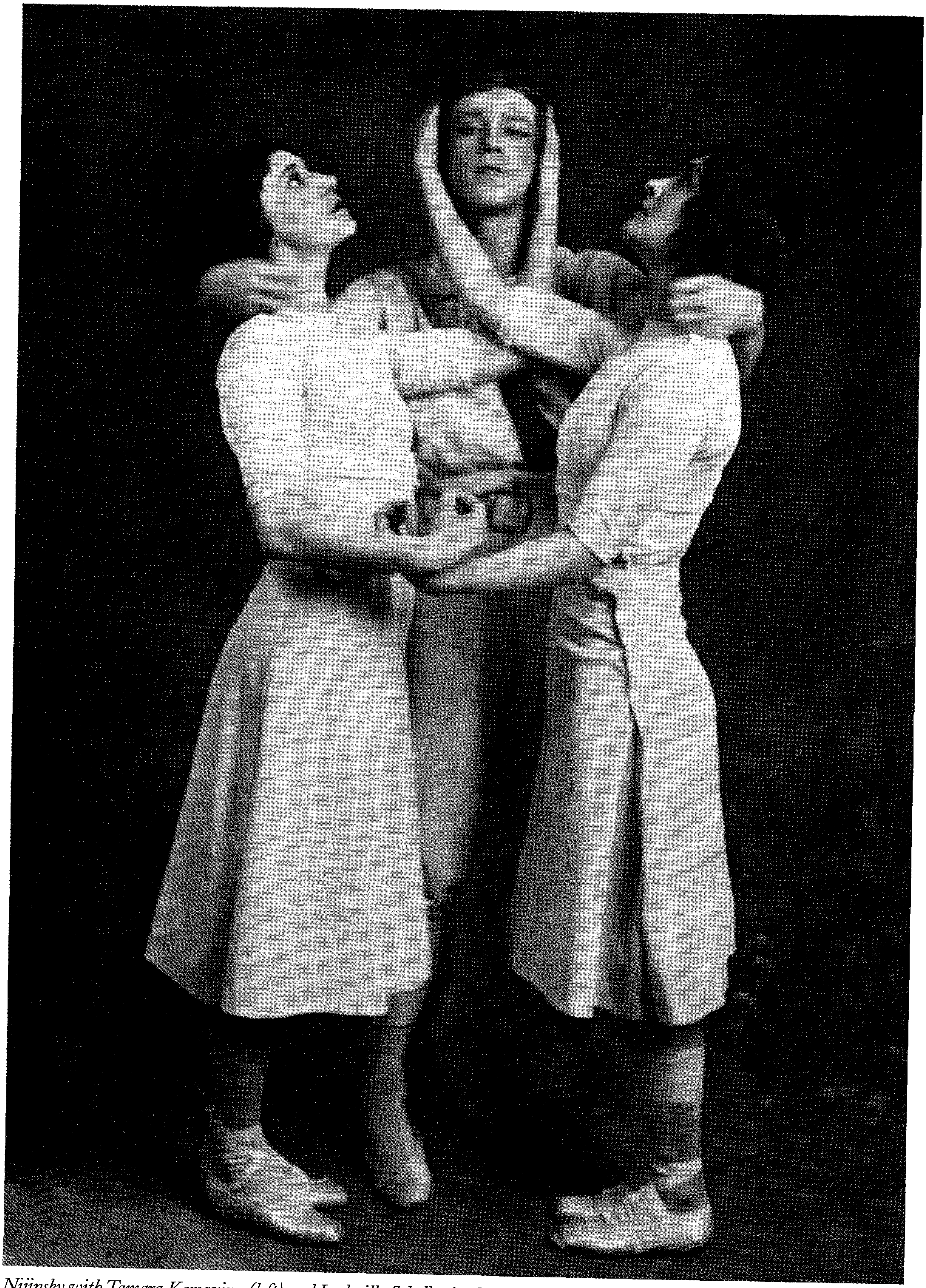
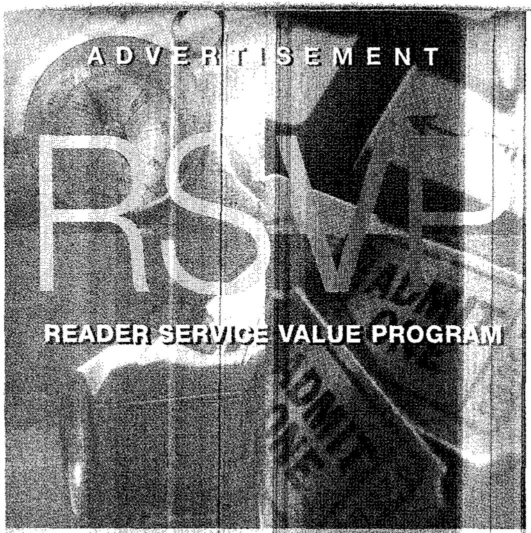


Nijinsky with Tamara Karsavina (left) and Ludmilla Schollar in the 1913 "Jeux," a ballet that had only a few performances.



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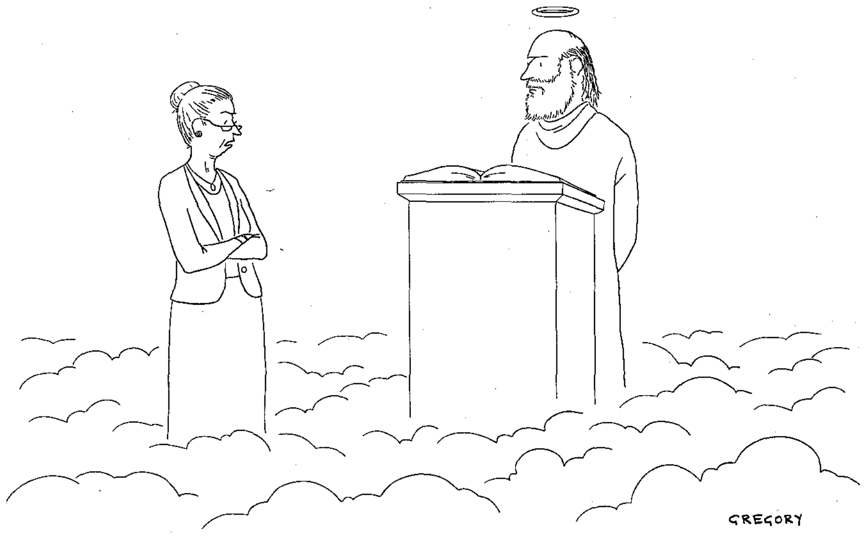

"Is it always so cloudy?"

friend Tamara Karsavina, who danced in the original ballet and did not like it.

"Jeux" has gone down in history as a prophetic ballet. In its use of sport and bisexuality and a sort of private, our-club language, it seemed to predict the youth culture of the twenties, still a war away. In its mixing of academic dance with the postures of modern life, it is said to have ushered in the so-called neoclassical ballet of the later twentieth century. The piece had a newness, a coolness, an atmosphere of the future.

What it didn't have was more than a few performances. Its traces were therefore very faint. Hodson used everything she could lay her hands on. She read books on tennis; she watched period newsreels. She found a quote from Nijinsky saying that modern man was defined by his dances, "the tango and the turkey trot." Presto! In went a tango and a turkey trot. What she knew—for example, the bisexuality—she beefed up like mad, from what I can tell. (At the end of her version, the dancers flee as if they were being pursued by the vice squad.) What she didn't know, she filled in, and that's the way the ballet looks. It has no through-line; it goes nowhere.

And then there was "Till." Nijinsky, in his previous ballets, had analyzed his medium, tried to find out what it could be if he released it from formula. In "Till," his fourth and last work, he did not. The ballet tells the story of Till Eulenspiegel, the legendary German trickster (played by Nijinsky) who, one medieval day in the Brunswick market square, mocks the rich folk, rouses the poor to rebellion, and finally is hanged, only to return in spirit. "Till" was less a ballet than a mime-drama, and not a particularly original one. Why would Nijinsky, the foremost experimental choreographer in Western ballet, produce this Robin Hood remake—and one in which dance, his former *subject*, was so negligible? There are several possibilities. One, he was now working without the help of Diaghilev, whose support was probably essential to the boldness of his earlier works. Two, at that point he was wrapped up in the philosophy of Leo Tolstoy, who had claimed that all art should be plain and clear, and serve the downtrodden. Three, he may already have been half mad.

Nijinsky later said that "Till" was no good. Was he wrong? We'll never know, because the evidence is so paltry. There were many reviews, but, as usual, they described events, not steps. There were a number of photos, and two surviving witnesses, both corps dancers, from the original cast. Hodson interviewed one of them, Valentina Kachouba, in 1989, and says she got some valuable information. I, too, coincidentally, spoke to Kachouba in 1989. She was more than ninety years old. She told me that "Till" was performed only once. (It was performed twenty-three times.) She described how rushed the rehearsal process was and how much of the piece, in consequence, was improvised. "There was no choreography," she said. "Nijinsky was the only one who danced, and he, too, improvised." He probably improvised wonderfully. One reviewer, H. T. Parker, of the Boston *Evening Transcript*, found in the ballet "the triumph of an idea and a temperament in perpetual symbol." Amid the frantic hubbub of Hodson's reconstruction—dancers waving scarves, stealing apples, trying to look like medieval market-goers—you would have been hard put to find a symbol. It was difficult enough to follow the story.

You have to give Hodson and Archer credit. They do not produce know-nothing reconstructions. They have ideas; they form hypotheses. "Jeux," to them, was Nijinsky's "Bloomsbury ballet." "Till," Hodson says, was "expressionist theatre." They believe that Nijinsky practiced a strict economy: that for each ballet he established a body posture and used it as the basis for the whole dance. They also feel that choreography can be derived from visual evidence—photographs, costume sketches. One should notice, however, the extent to which such hypotheses serve their needs. In the absence of choreographic evidence, it is not inconvenient to believe that the dance was ruled by a non-dance idea (Bloomsbury, Expressionism); that all the choreography was based on one stance; and that choreography is derived from visual materials, which are far more likely to survive than dance evidence.

Finally, what is so depressing about the Hodson-Archer Nijinsky reconstructions is their indifference to dance as an autonomous art form, with its own logic. If Stravinsky's score for "The Rite of Spring" had been lost, would Hodson and Archer deduce it from the set design? If there was no trace of the set design, would they reconstruct it from the score? If not, then how can dance be derived from non-dance evidence? Hodson, in her 1996 book, "Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace," says that for a long section of "The Rite"—a circle dance for the women—she had the floor pattern and the timing. She was missing only one thing: "How do the maidens walk? The exact step is not recorded." The exact step—in other words, the choreography.

Hodson and Archer have tried at times to indicate that their evidence was less than could be wished for. In a recent interview, Archer said, "'Jeux' is a reconstruction 'after Nijinsky.' It is not a reconstruction of Nijinsky. We feel it is very important to say that." It was not important enough, however, for him to get the Rome Opera to say that. The program credits for all three ballets read "choreography by Vaslav Nijinsky" and "choreographic reconstruction" by Millicent Hodson. No "after," no caveats. If Hodson and Archer are concerned to let us know that some of this dancing has been supplied by them, the companies they work for are not. Ballet is in the dumps right now. Company directors, to defend their budgets, desperately need something to inspire the feature writers and get the box-office phones ringing. For this purpose it is hard to imagine anything more useful than a "rediscovery" of the lost works of Vaslav Nijinsky, that mad genius, that extinguished flame—the van Gogh of ballet. And if it can be suggested that those works were not just lost but banished, that they were subversive, anti-establishment (Hodson has a theory that "The Rite of Spring" was purposely suppressed), all the better. Who could object to the vindication of this brave artist? Not the journalists. "NIJINSKY WORK REBORN" ran the headline in the *International Herald Tribune* as Hodson and Archer unveiled their "Till," in 1994.

Now, it seems, the resurrection is complete, but perhaps not. In 1919, after Nijinsky had begun to go seriously crazy—after he started wandering the streets exhorting people to go to church—he gave one last performance, in a hotel sitting room in Saint-Moritz. According to his wife, he sat down in front of the members of the audience and stared at them for what seemed a half hour. Then he berated them for having failed to prevent the First World War. Then he launched into a violent solo, presumably improvised, and eventually stopped, whereupon the spectators—some of them "in a state of nerves," according to one witness—hurried off into the night. It was recently announced that Hodson and Archer would "soon première 'Nijinsky's Last Dance,' based on his final solo from 1919." Before, you could say that they were doing their best. But "Nijinsky's Last Dance"? This is starting to look like a racket. ♦

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THE ART WORLD

GHOSTS

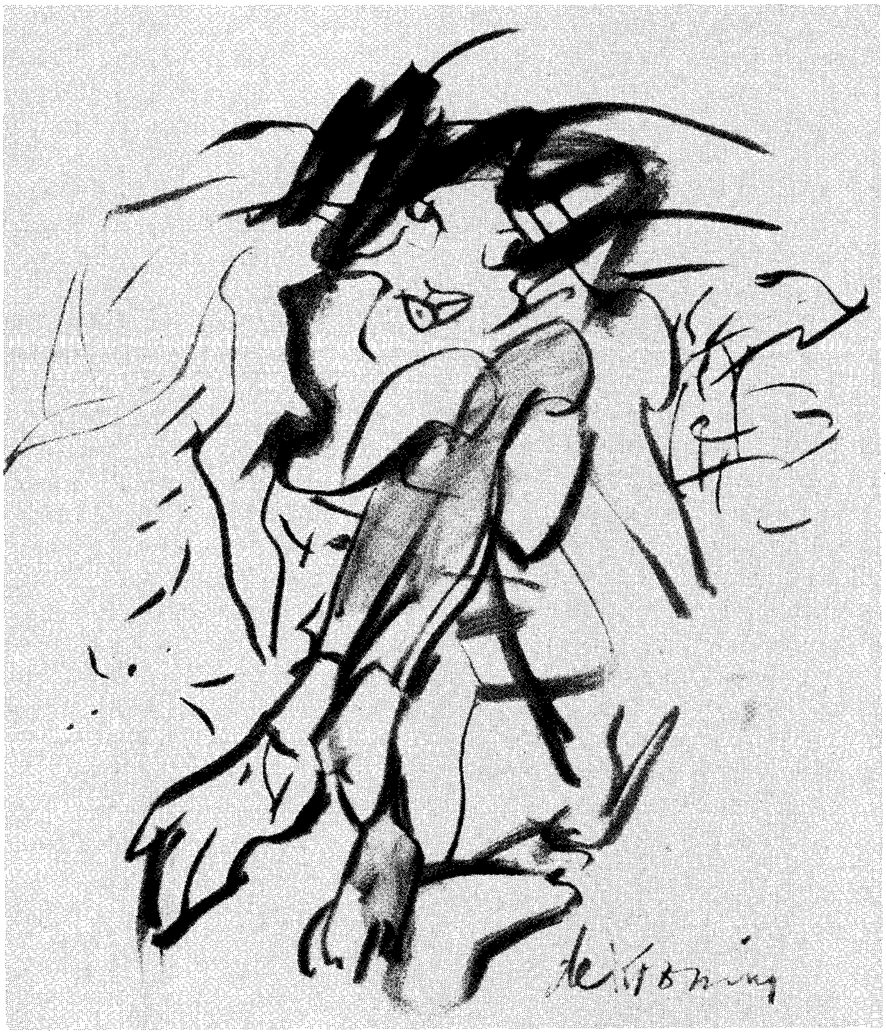
The dazzling mystery of de Kooning's last paintings.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The late, late paintings of Willem de Kooning are spectral orphans of the twentieth century, left on the doorstep of the twenty-first. I have in mind the immense, eerie body of work—more than three hundred and forty large canvases, of which only several dozen have been shown—that de Kooning produced while, by all accounts, he was losing his mind to Alzheimer's. The paintings date from about 1980 until the artist "finally drifted away from his brushes in mid-1990," in the words of the Museum of Modern Art curator Robert Storr. (De Kooning died under nursing care in 1997, at the age of ninety-two.) They are de Koonings with a difference: more deliberate and leaner than the work of his tumultuous previous phases, with simpler colors often played out in sinuous ribbons, but firmly scaled and virtuosically composed. There is nothing geezerish about them. When they burst on the art world in an exhibition in 1996, journalists jumped on the Alzheimer's angle. Explanations were sought for the extended creativity of a man who, after 1986, could no longer sign his name. Oliver Sacks, quoted in that show's catalogue, seemed to settle the matter. " 'Style,' neurologically," Sacks said, "is the deepest part of one's being, and may be preserved, almost to the last, in a dementia." In any case, the importance of de Kooning's extra innings transcends issues of gerontology. His last period tells a story about painting and the meaning of art which could not be more timely.

"Willem de Kooning: In Process," organized by the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art and curated by Klaus Kertess, is at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C., until May 28th. Kertess uses paintings, drawings, and adjunct material—mainly tracings on vellum-like paper—from the years 1971 to 1987 to explore de Kooning's working methods. Painterly procedure was always the sinew and soul of de Kooning's art. When we look at almost any picture that he made after 1945 or so, we dive into the middle of something whose beginnings are obscured and whose ends hang fire. The middle is where de Kooning liked to be, deploying his gifts and skills in the tactical emergencies of an uncertain battle. To guarantee surprise, he regularly sabotaged his own facility by drawing with his left hand or with his eyes closed, shuttling configurations from one painting to another, and squashing wet paint surfaces with sheets of newspaper. (Peeled off, those sheets became a species of chance monoprints that, like the tracings, defy categorization: are they art works or merely, in the phrase of one art historian, "work product"? Their fortuitous beauty is enough for some people; there is a market for them.) De Kooning's self-scavenging techniques led him not so much forward, from one thing to the next, as incessantly sideways, from one thing into another. This helps to explain the longevity of his genius: he didn't have to remember what he was about. Through his routines of serendipity, his art could more or less keep track of itself. Meanwhile, his hand never lost its cunning.

That hand was already formidably adept when de Kooning, who was just twelve when he began studies at the Rotterdam Academy of Fine Arts and Techniques, immigrated to Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1926, at the age of twenty-two. During the next twenty years, he developed history's most eloquent brushstroke, which, thick or thin, communicates shape, line, substance, direction,



De Kooning's drawing "Untitled (Seated Woman on the Beach)," 1966-67.

© 2000 WILLEM DE KOONING REVOCABLE TRUST/ARS

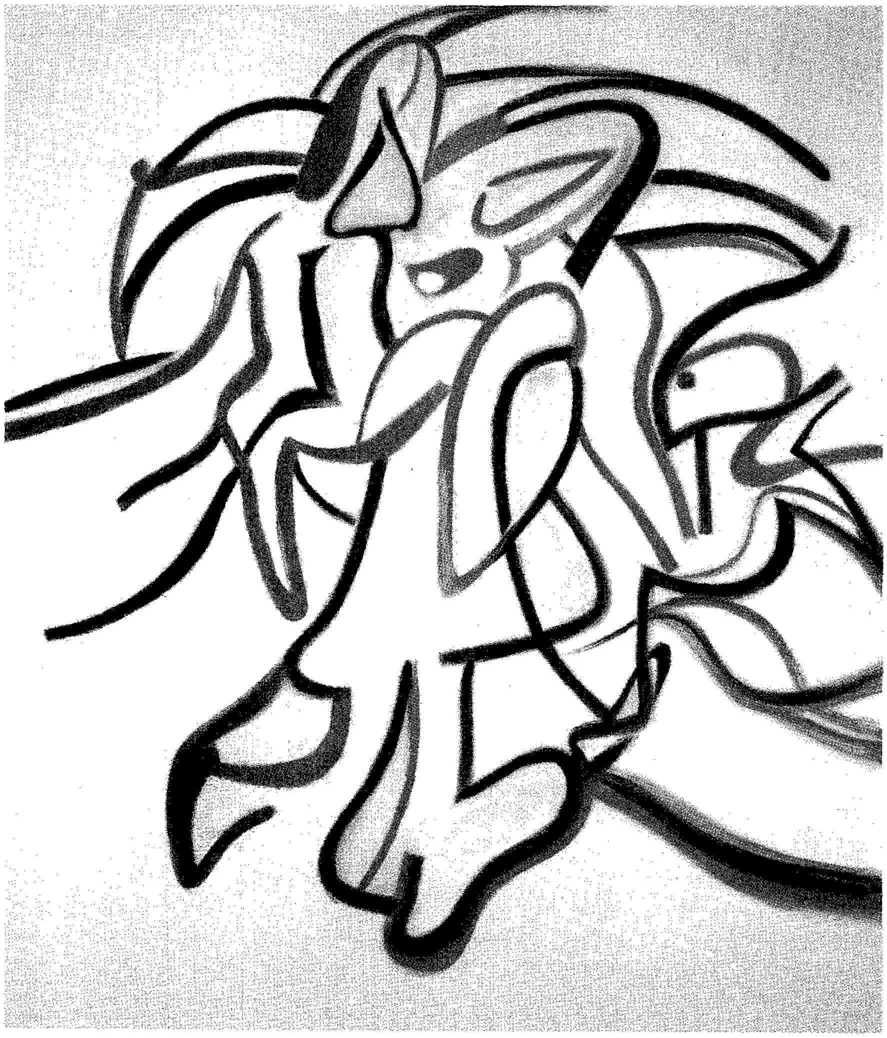
contour, speed, and pretty much every other trope that paint can embody. Picasso is said to have called de Kooning's work "melted Picasso," a remark that was canny, if typically self-centered. Western painting, in general, went molten in the Dutchman's oven. Clement Greenberg, in 1955, called de Kooning's pride "Luciferian." "Were he to realize all his aims," the imperious critic wrote, "all other ambitious painting would have to stop for a generation since he would have set both its forward and its backward limits."

Such dominance was not to be, as Greenberg, to his satisfaction, already knew. (He and de Kooning despised each other.) The rules of avant-garde painting had changed. Conceptual control supplanted de Kooningesque lyrical invention. Jackson Pollock and the other "big picture" Abstract Expressionists had, without necessarily intending to, sparked a revolution in art as design: painting that is substantially complete in its initiating idea. Then came Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, Frank Stella, and the era of what the critic Harold Rosenberg acutely but too dismissively called art works as "packages." Rosenberg's indignant championing of de Kooning—whose practice he had exalted in his gaudy existentialist theory of "action painting"—did the artist no favors in the new, tough-minded art world. When radicals pronounced painting dead, there was no doubt about whose funeral they fancied. De Kooning's isolation in contemporary art after 1960 or so accounts for the orphaned air of his late work. A larger historical shift explains the work's sudden authority. All the cocksure movements of the last century have collapsed into a bewildering, trackless here and now. This condition turns out to be de Kooning's perennial garden.

In the nineteen-sixties, de Kooning's style was swimmingly sensuous, playing touch-and-go with smiling female flesh in moist landscapes. In the seventies, his paintings turned more abstract and violent, with screeching colors and a climactic air—shooting the works. Then began the artist's fighting retreat. The paintings of the eighties display progressive losses and resourceful compensations. For example, he stopped executing swift, mighty gestures and began representing them. Shapes that suggest big, audacious strokes are composed of cobbled, careful little strokes. One senses spontaneity at a filtering remove; it's like hearing jazz over the telephone. De Kooning's last phase lacks his familiar antic anxiety—the emotional edge that he once characterized as "*No* fear but a lot of trembling" (riffing on Kierkegaard, his favorite philosopher). The evolution of a motif from one late picture to another can seem less a matter of inspiration and more one of impersonal will. It's as if the motif itself—such as a scribble of two women in a drawing of 1980, which recurred in paintings in 1987—were calling the shots. If feelings had bones, these paintings would be skeletons.

Late de Koonings are hard to describe. It's not that they lack definition and harmony. Their adagio loops and wristy flares—mostly in primary colors, carving up bright white grounds—hang together like passages of music. But there is no sense of a governing intention, much less of the sublime contrariness with which the artist once joyously shredded pictorial norms. The octogenarian de Kooning did not forget how to paint, only why. Imagine a Greek tragic hero onstage without a chorus to give his speeches their fateful meaning. The role of the chorus falls to us, the audience.

But what do you and I know for certain about painting's fundamental mysteries, which, at last, had de Kooning wholly in their grasp? The subject of his late work is a vertiginous oneness of matter and spirit, and it demands humility. I am reminded of something that William James wrote in "The Varieties of Religious Experience" about a particular state of mind "in which the will to assert ourselves and hold our own has been displaced by a willingness to close our mouths and be as nothing in the floods and waterspouts of God." ♦



An untitled painting of the same subject (1986): the artist as self-scavenger.

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

TRUST ME

Trouble among French vacationers and Henry James's expatriates.

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new French thriller "With a Friend Like Harry" starts in a station wagon on a broiling day and never cools down. The car belongs to a teacher named Michel (Laurent Lucas), who is on vacation with his wife, Claire (Mathilde Seigner), and their three young daughters. From the beginning, we realize that we are in the care of a director, Dominik Moll, who has an instinctive grasp of family values. By these I do not mean group hugs, sing-alongs, tax credits, or gusts of breezy togetherness. I mean ear infections, howls over dropped candy, the doldrums of a long drive, and, beneath all that, a love that simply has no time to speak its name. Michel pulls into a gas station and changes the baby's diaper; he goes to wash his hands, and, at that moment, his world flies apart. "We know each other," says a guy in the washroom, who introduces himself as Harry Ballestero (Sergi López) and claims that he knew Michel in high school. You will try, and fail, to shake from your brain that first image of Harry: stocky, still, unblinking, with a smile an inch too wide and hands that droop and drip in front of him like a puppet's, fresh from the faucet. He really is a schoolmate, and he wants to be a friend; yet he is also a madman, with the adhesive glaze of the deranged, and Michel is stuck fast.

But custom must be observed, especially in France, and when Harry suggests that he follow Michel and Claire to their place in the country for a drink, and offers to ferry the fretful girls in his air-conditioned Mercedes, it is hard to say no. Harry is travelling with his girlfriend, Plum (Sophie Guillemin), who strokes the back of his neck and murmurs that she adores him. They arrive at the crumbling house as night descends, although, if anything, Moll squeezes more panic from the hours of daylight than from the traditional bogeys of the dark; Harry's plausibility blooms in the sunshine, and you catch a harder gleam in the plasticity of his grin. "Solve any problem" is his motto, and he duly sets to work on the glitches in Michel's existence. Busted car? No sweat; Harry buys him a new four-by-four, a monstrous rhino in scarlet and chrome, waving aside his protestations with the modest admission that he has cash to burn, inherited from his father. "Since he died, I've handled his money," he says; as the film deepens, you begin to wonder grimly about that death. And so Harry proceeds to the next obstacle: Michel's bickering parents, who drain his time and good will. Would he function more smoothly without them? For that matter, what about Claire, his weary wife? And then there are those pesky kids . . .

"With a Friend Like Harry" is designed not to scare you but to make you worry; the whole thing is like the old dry well that just sits there gaping behind Michel's house and waits for somebody, or some body, to fall into it. Long before I saw the film, I heard rumors that it summoned the ghost of Hitchcock; the label doesn't quite fit, for Moll lacks the chilled amusement of the Master, as well as his fetishistic focus on particulars. Yet Harry Ballestero is an obvious nod to Manny Balestrero, the Henry Fonda character in "The Wrong Man," and the closeup of Harry peeking through a keyhole reminds you of nosy Norman Bates in "Psycho." In the end, there *is* something Hitchcockian about the anxiety that Moll's movie provokes; even if you don't believe what happens, you accept it, as you do "Strangers on a

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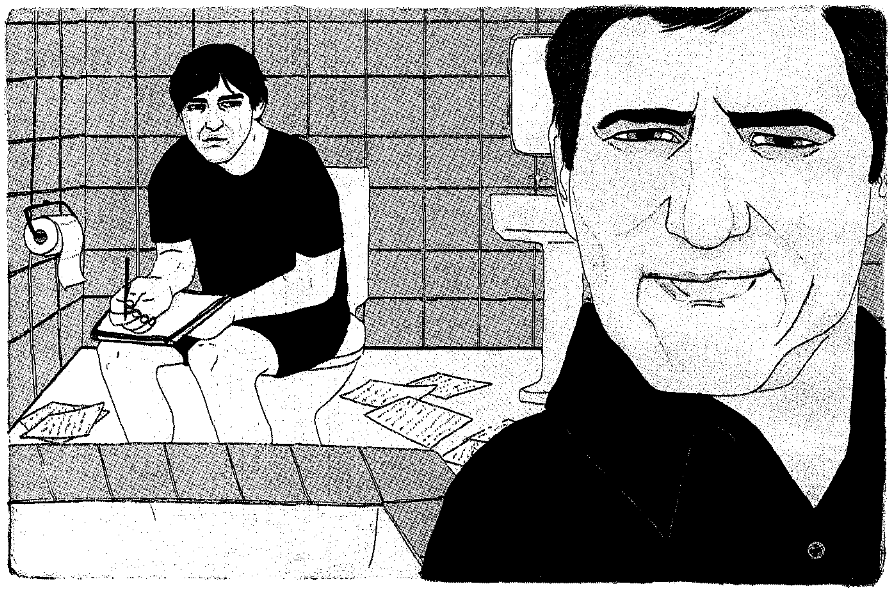
Train," signing up instantly to the loopy conditions of the plot and forcing yourself to admit that Harry, in his hellish way, has a point. He is hardly alone, for example, in his devotion to the curative properties of a high income. The rage for order, too, is in all of us, as is a trampled dismay at the debris of ordinary living; no wonder Michel—lean and loping, with a tragic, early-Beatles haircut—is intrigued. Like many men his age, he has slid from the belief that he would make his mark upon the world to a shrugging acknowledgment that, apart from his offspring, he will leave nothing but a minor dent. It is exactly this sense of shortfall that Harry picks up on and exploits; as his malignity spread, I began to think of him less as a homicidal maniac and more as a peculiarly forceful career adviser.



Dominik Moll's "With a Friend Like Harry" is a film designed to make you worry.

LARA TOMLIN

Sergi López, an actor at home in both French and Spanish, inhabits the role of Harry with ominous command; even the back of his head gave me the creeps, and I was sorry that Moll felt obliged to flesh him out with a scene of beastly screaming—it makes his fury too obvious and his repression much too readable. I prefer the sight of Harry sitting half naked at the kitchen table in the middle of the night, swallowing a raw egg with Zen aplomb. (He eats one after each orgasm. "They say it aids virility," he confides.) The lucky recipient of his eggy libido is Plum, or, in the original French, Prune—an imprecise name for an actress like Sophie Guillemin, who is perhaps the least wrinkled being ever to curve onto a movie screen. Trussed up in tops so imprisoning that you keep expecting her breasts to attempt a mass breakout, like Steve McQueen and the gang in "The Great Escape," Plum seems at first a cipher, a Betty Boop sex doll, and yet her freakish calm is stirred by gentleness. The little girls warm to her presence; to them, she must be the ideal combination, a fellow-child encased in a motherly frame.

To Harry, of course, she is a problem; he brought her along, but when she starts to give off signs of unnecessary humanity he cannot cope. That is why "With a Friend Like Harry" is more cautionary tale than horror flick; you will feel wary of carrying out radical repairs on your life when you see the damage that such pure logic can do to the lives of others. More alarming still is the implication that, thanks to Harry, Michel can start to write again—something that he has not done since high school. As events begin to boil, he sits in his gum-pink bathroom and scribbles a short story late into the night. For anyone out there who would kill to be a writer, this is the film for you.

The trouble with Harry, perhaps, is that his methods lack refinement. If you wish to worm into a family and gnaw at it from within, why not try the Henry James technique? There will be less bloodletting, but an equally satisfying sense of corrosion and catastrophe. Take, for instance, the near-incestuous knottings of "The Golden Bowl," the latest James novel to undergo the Merchant-Ivory process. In 1903, Prince Amerigo (Jeremy Northam) marries Maggie Verver (Kate Beckinsale), the heiress to the fortune of her father, Adam Verver (Nick Nolte), who himself marries the impecunious Charlotte Stant (Uma Thurman), who is a good friend of Maggie's—though not so good that she feels able to let her, Maggie, know that she, Charlotte, was once the lover of her, Maggie's, new husband. Or something like that.

Trying to adapt this for the screen is like descending into a gold mine, pickaxe in hand, and deciding to make a golden bowl all your own. The Merchant-Ivory team—the director James Ivory, the producer Ismail Merchant, and the screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala—have hacked away at the rock face of the text and left us with the seam of the plot. Thus exposed, it is close to ridiculous; when a woman is as willfully innocent as Maggie, watching her husband head off to the tweedy temptations of a country-house party, how can we not feel that such innocence is the flip side of the fool? Likewise, the symbolic burden of the bowl itself, which Charlotte thinks of buying as a wedding gift for Maggie, is no longer cradled in the texture of the prose. Instead, with its barely perceptible crack, it lies like deadweight on the dialogue: "I can't believe it. It looked so perfect." "Yes. A perfect fake." The result is a curious mixture: a generous decorum, as you would expect from James Ivory, gilding a hollow clunkiness—you get what the film is about but not what it is *for*. There is a dangerous hint of padding, too, in the costume balls, dance troupes, and piano thumping that are tagged on to the original story, as if to confirm that its filigree of suggestion will never, for moviegoers, be enough. Still, some of the performers strive at full, unpadded strength; the best of them, unsurprisingly, is Nick Nolte, who brings to Adam Verver—"America's first billionaire," we are informed—a gravity so gruff that you wonder what distant ruthlessness, moral and commercial, may have led to his current, Raphael-savoring finesse. "The years of darkness had been needed to render possible the years of light," James writes. A touch of extra darkness, when it comes to Merchant-Ivory, is always welcome. ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL SLANSKY

THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS: THE QUIZ

1. What was George W. Bush's response when asked what he and British Prime Minister Tony Blair had in common?

(a) "We both had our legitimacy questioned, except for him."

(b) "We both use Colgate toothpaste."

(c) "We once did blow together."

(d) "We both laugh when people are executed."

2. Who is Paul Offner?

(a) The man who testified that John Ashcroft once started off a job interview with him by asking, "Do you have the same sexual preferences as most men?"

(b) The black Missouri Supreme Court judge whose appointment to the federal bench Ashcroft blocked in the Senate by falsely claiming that he was soft on the death penalty and "pro-criminal."

(c) The gay man whose appointment as Ambassador to Luxembourg Ashcroft tried to block.

(d) The editor of the virulently racist publication *Southern Partisan*, which Ashcroft has praised for helping to "set the record straight."

3. On February 7th, a disgruntled I.R.S. worker fired a handgun outside the White House. Dick Cheney was in his office working at the time. Where was George W. Bush?

(a) In the Oval Office, refining his education program.

(b) In the Cabinet room with Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, planning the attack on Iraq.

(c) In the study, running some new nicknames by Karen Hughes.

(d) In the residence, working out.

4. True or false: Eight weeks into George W. Bush's term, a *Times*/CBS News poll reported that twenty-five per cent of Americans believe that people other than Bush are "really running the government most of the time."

5. Complete George W. Bush's statement "You teach a child to read and __________ will pass a literacy test."

(a) they

(b) he or her

(c) her and him

(d) it

Match the Observation About George W. Bush with the Observer:

6. "He kisses everybody that gets within reach."

7. "He has to stop drawing his eyebrows together too closely to convey seriousness; it makes him look like an owl about to pounce."

8. "His eyes are close together and dark, two little raisins on a beige muffin, and they both sparkle and are unexpressive."

ISTVAN BANYAI

9. "He's not the kind of guy I'd like to sit on the bank and fish with. I'd like to throw him in the water."

10. "George W. Bush is like a bad comic working the room, a moron."

(a) *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan.

(b) Former Senator Eugene McCarthy.

(c) *USA Today* TV critic Robert Bianco.

(d) Actor Martin Sheen.

(e) Retired logging-equipment salesman Walter Taylor.

11. When the White House aide Karl Rove said, "That would be nice. That would be really nice. That would be really, really nice," what fantasy was he indulging?

(a) China deciding it didn't really need an apology after all.

(b) Arnold Schwarzenegger being elected governor of California.

(c) George W. Bush getting the Cold War going again.

(d) Democrats ceasing to point out the inequity of the tax cut.

12. Which headlines did not appear in an American newspaper?

(a) "E.P.A. TO KILL NEW ARSENIC LIMITS FOR WATER"

(b) "U.S. PROPOSES END TO TESTING FOR SALMONELLA IN SCHOOL BEEF"

(c) "BUSH REVERSES CLINTON POLICY ON FEDERAL AID FOR ABORTION COUNSELLING OVERSEAS"

(d) "BUSH, IN REVERSAL, WON'T SEEK CUT IN EMISSIONS OF CARBON DIOXIDE"

(e) "BUSH TO CLOSE OFFICES ON AIDS, RACE"

(f) "BUSH HALTS PROTECTION ORDER FOR HABITAT OF ENDANGERED SHEEP"

(g) "WHITE HOUSE ENDS BAR ASSOCIATION'S ROLE IN SCREENING FEDERAL JUDGES"

(h) "BUSH'S BUDGET WOULD CUT THREE PROGRAMS TO AID CHILDREN"

(i) "MORATORIUM ASKED ON SUITS THAT SEEK TO PROTECT SPECIES"

(j) "BUSH BUDGET ON HEALTH CARE WOULD CUT AID TO UNINSURED"

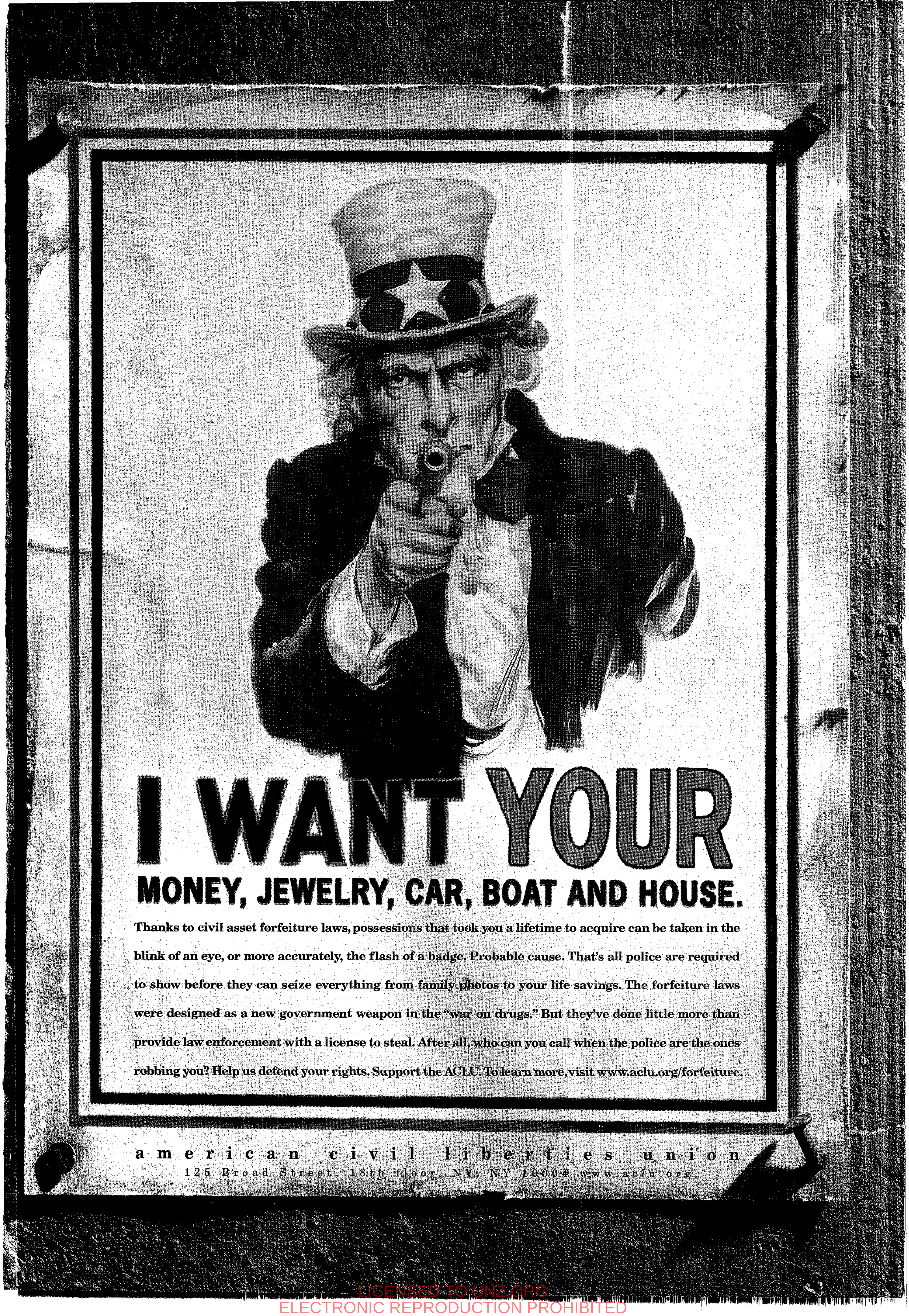
(k) "BUSH TEAM URGES REPEAL OF MINING RULE"

(l) "ADMINISTRATION PROMISES BUSINESS-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE SAFETY REGULATIONS"

(m) "NADER SAYS THERE MAY BE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BUSH AND GORE AFTER ALL"

Answers:

(1) b, (2) a, (3) d, (4) False—fifty per cent believed it, (5) b, (6) b, (7) c, (8) a, (9) e, (10) d, (11) b, (12) m.



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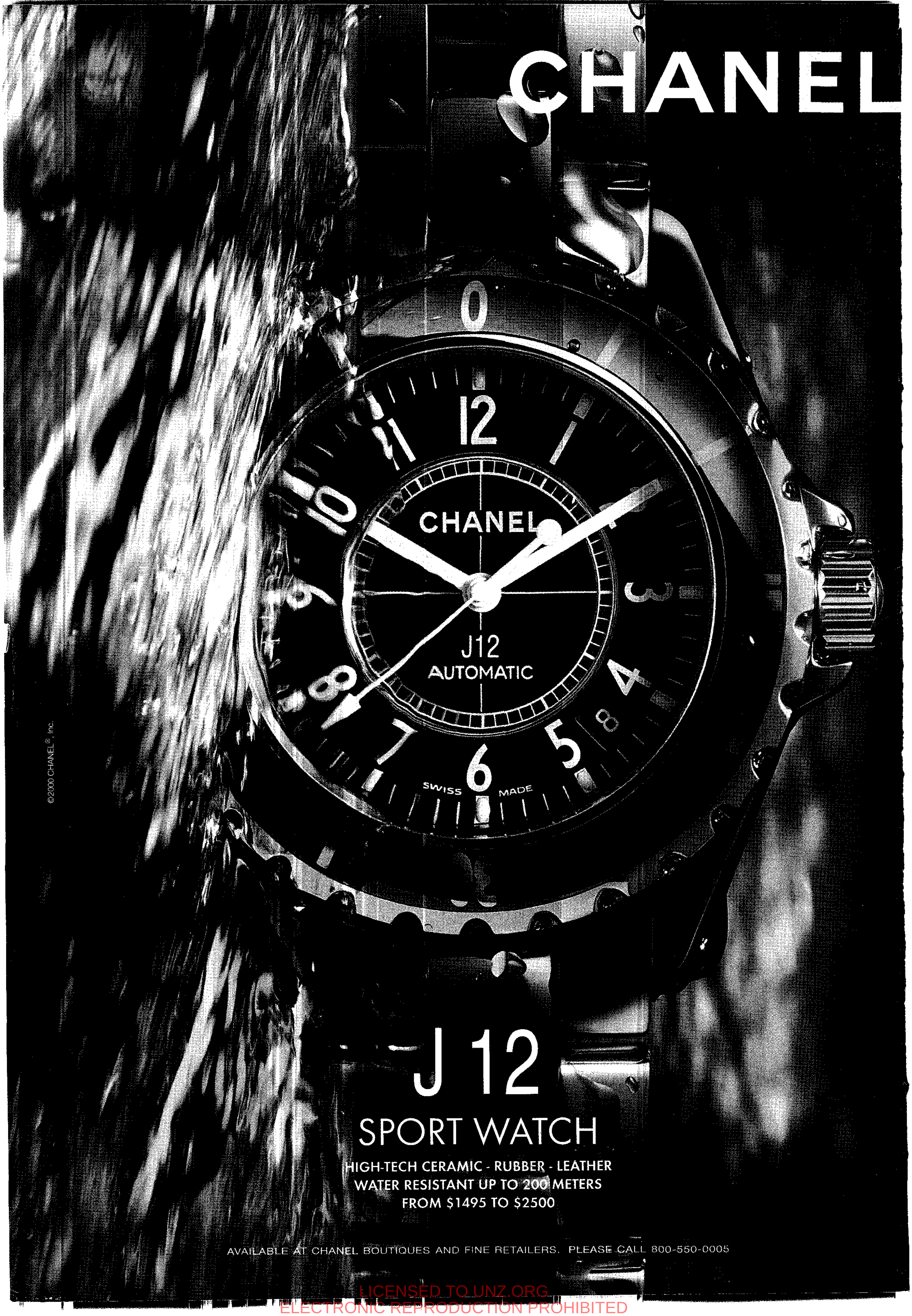
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